

THE
OLD PINCUSHION
OR
AUNT CLOTILDA'S
QUESTS

BY
MRS. MOLESWORTH.



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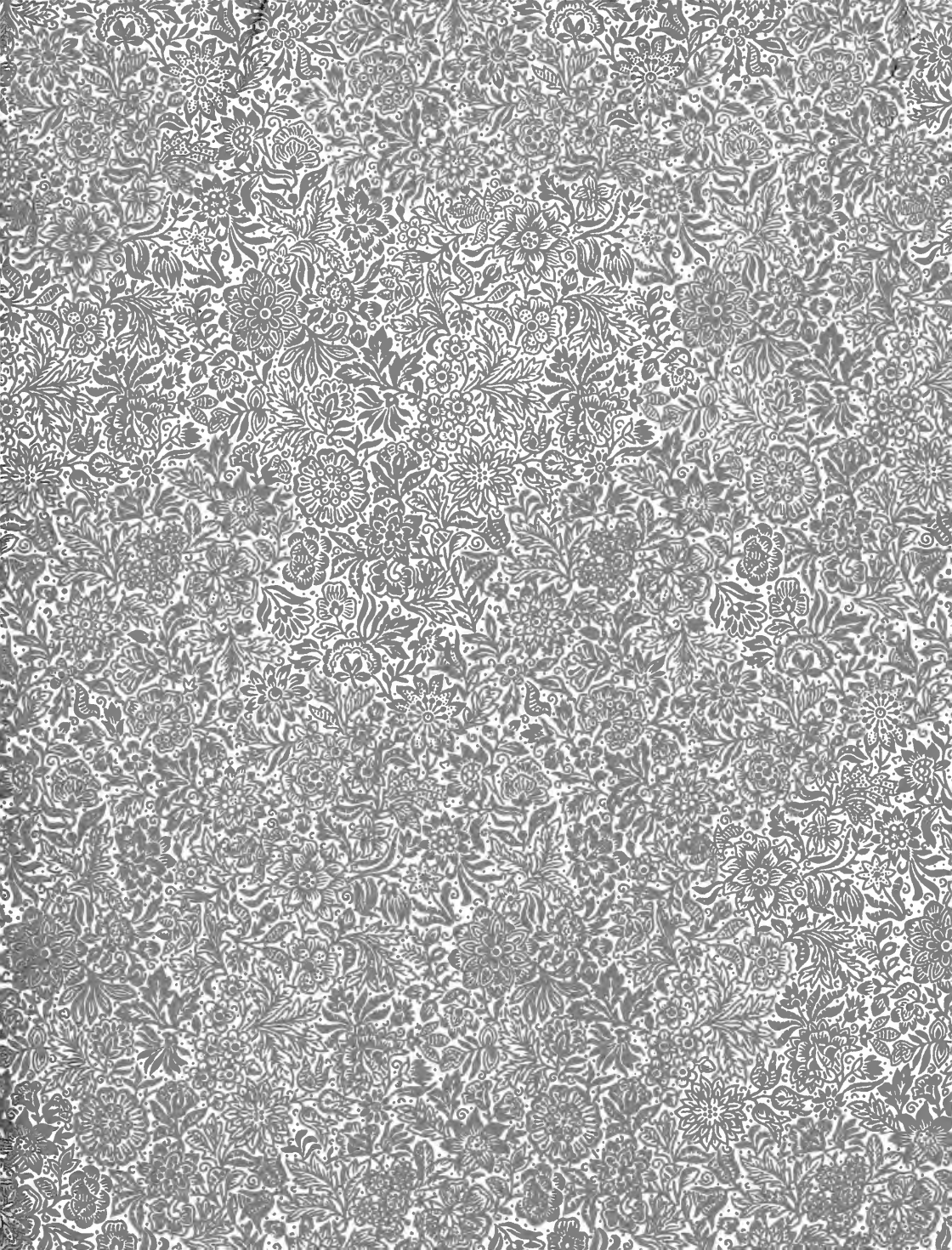
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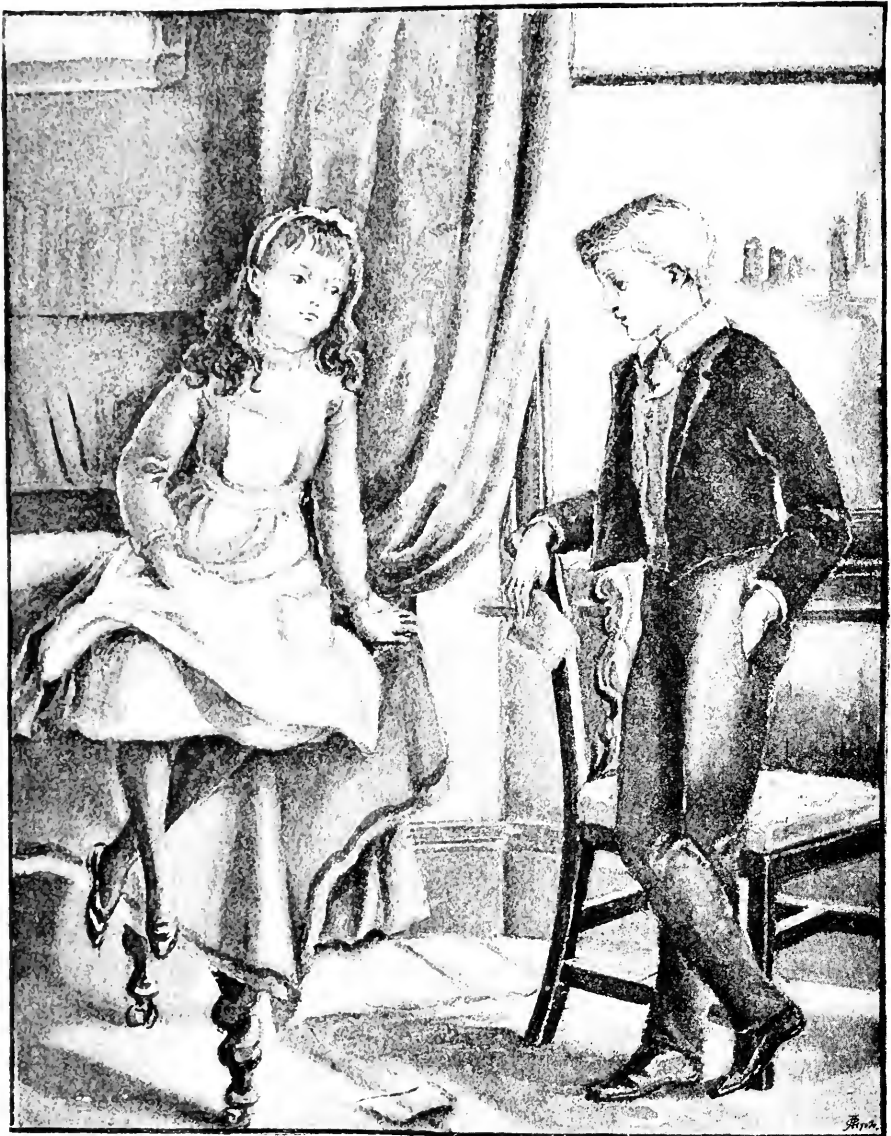
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THE OLD PINCUSHION

OR

AUNT CLOTILDA'S GUESTS



'I DON'T BELIEVE YOU CARE ONE BIT.'—(PAGE 9.)

THE
OLD PINCUSHION

OR

AUNT CLOTILDA'S GUESTS

BY

MRS. MOLESWORTH

AUTHOR OF 'CARROTS,' 'THE PALACE IN THE GARDEN,' ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY MRS. ADRIAN HOPE



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TO

THREE DEAR

THOUGH UNKNOWN

LITTLE FRIENDS

BERTHA

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THE OLD PINCUSHION.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER WITH BAD NEWS.



O, Kathie, I don't believe you care one bit; I really don't,' said Neville reproachfully.

Kathie was seated as she loved to be—on the edge of a rather high table. Her skirts were short and her legs were long; from her present elevation she could swing the latter about delightfully. She gave them an extra energetic fling before she replied to her brother, and then, trying her best to look concerned and distressed, and only succeeding in giving to her funny little face an expression of comical demureness, she turned to Neville,—

'I do care. You haven't any right to say I don't. If I didn't care for myself, I'd care because you do, and because *they* do. I'm not a—a—unnatural monster. I'd cry if it

was my way, but you know it isn't; and a good thing too. A nice life I'd have had *here*,' with great contempt, 'if I'd been a crying child like little Philippa Harley. She's tired everybody out. But what's more, I do care for myself too. I've been looking forward to them coming home, and nice proper holidays, like other children. Yes, indeed, I should just think I had.'

'Holidays only!' Neville repeated. 'It would have been much better than holidays—for you, any way. They wouldn't have left you here. I'd have stayed at school, I suppose—boys must; but I don't mind school. I'd like it very well if I had a home besides.'

Kathie did not seem to have noticed his last words. A new expression had come into her face, as she repeated softly to herself, 'They wouldn't have left me here. I never thought of that.'

'You'll begin to care really now, I suppose,' said her brother, rather bitterly. 'I didn't think you were so selfish.'

The little girl faced about at that.

'I'm not selfish—at least, if selfish means only caring about oneself and not about other people. I don't pretend not to care about myself *too*. I'm one of the people in the world as well as being myself. I should care for myself. But I care for others too. I'm sorry for you, and for *them*, though not as sorry as for you, because I know you and I don't know them. That's natural. I can't pretend to

care for them the same as if I knew them. People who want their children to care a lot for them shouldn't leave them when they're too little to remember, and never see them again for years and years.'

'It isn't much "shouldn't" about it,' the boy replied. 'It's nothing but "can't." Papa and mamma would be only too glad to come home if they could. I'm sure you might know that, Kathie.'

'Well, I've been looking forward to their coming as well as you,' said Kathie, rather grumpily. 'I'm sure I've thought about it ever since last year, when mamma wrote they'd be *sure* to come before this next summer. I don't see but what if that hor—' she stopped; 'if that old aunt wouldn't leave papa anything else, she might at least have left him money enough to come home on a visit, as she had promised to pay it.'

'Kathie,' said Neville, in a rather awe-struck tone, 'you shouldn't speak that way when she is dead.'

'I don't see any harm in it,' the little girl replied, undauntedly. 'She should have settled things properly, and then we could have felt nicely sorry about her. I don't understand you, Neville—I don't think you're fair to me. First you scold me for not being sorry and not caring, and then when you've regularly worked me up, you turn upon me for saying what I feel.'

Neville looked rather at a loss.

'I don't mean to do that,' he said. 'I suppose the truth is, I'm so dreadfully disappointed that I don't know what to say. But I must be going, Kathie. I suppose you don't want me to leave you the letter?' and as he spoke he half held out to her an envelope he held in his hand.

Kathie shook her head.

'No, you'd better keep it. You'll answer it at once, I suppose. I shouldn't know what to say. You tell them from me that I'm awfully sorry, and I'll write next week.'

'And,' Neville went on, 'about writing to Aunt Clotilda? Can't you write to her, Kathie? Mamma says one of us should.'

'Well, you'd do it far better than I. I shouldn't like to send it without you seeing it first, any way. I don't feel inclined to write to her—I think she's been very stupid—she might have managed better if she really cares for them as she makes out.'

'Kathie!' said Neville—this time with real displeasure in his tone, 'I do think that's too bad of you. Poor Aunt Clotilda! You see, papa says she is almost the most to be pitied of anybody. And there's another thing, Kathie: I don't think it's right of you always to speak of papa and mamma as "they" or "them." It's not—not respectful; not as if you cared for them.'

'Oh, bother!' said Kathie; 'if you're going to begin again about my not caring, Neville, I just wish you'd go. I'm tired

of explaining to you, and—there ; *I* must go. Miss Eccles is sending for me ;’ and as the footsteps her quick ears had heard coming along the passage stopped at the door, Kathleen slid down from the table, and stood erect and demure, as a girl of seventeen or so, with a sharp, dark face looked in.

‘Miss Powys,’ she said, ‘it is time to get ready for dinner. You must be upstairs in five minutes ;’ and so saying, disappeared.

‘Good-bye, Kathie,’ said Neville, as he kissed her. ‘It was kind of Mr. Fanshaw to let me come, wasn’t it? And—oh! I forgot—Mrs. Fanshaw’s going to write to Miss Eccles to ask if you may spend next Wednesday with us—all day : that’s to say, to come to dinner and stay till the evening. I’m to fetch you walking, and bring you back in a hansom.’

‘That will be *splucious*!’ said Kathie, her eyes sparkling. ‘Oh! I say, I do hope old Eccles will let me go.’

A slight look of annoyance crossed the boy’s face. He disliked to hear his little sister talking slang, or any approach to it.

‘Old Eccles!’ he repeated. ‘I wish you wouldn’t say that, Kathie. “Splucious” I don’t mind—it was our own nursery word.’

‘Neville, you *are* a prig!’ said Kathie. ‘However, I’ll forgive you in return for the good news. Good-bye till Wednesday, and do thank them awfully. I do wish old Eccles was like them.’



And already, in the prospect of the immediate pleasure, more than half forgetting the important bad news which her brother had come to tell her, Kathleen flew along the passage, and upstairs two steps at a time, by way of working off some of her excitement.

She was only twelve years old, though, to judge by her height, she might have been older. But she had the thin, lanky look of a fast-growing child; there was nothing the least precocious about her.

‘She is such a baby still,’ thought Neville, as he made his way soberly along the street. ‘I suppose she can’t help it,’ he went on, with a vague idea of excusing her to

himself for he scarcely knew what. 'But I do wish, oh! how I do wish they were coming home! Five years more, papa says; five years more it will be. It won't matter for me so much. I've been so fortunate in being with the Fanshaws; and any way, I'd have had to be going to a big school by now. But for Kathie, she'll be seventeen, and she won't have been with mamma for eleven years. It doesn't seem *right*, somehow. And just now, when everything might have been easy. Oh dear! I wonder why things go wrong when they might just as well go right!'

Neville Powys was only thirteen and a half, barely eighteen months older than Kathleen. But in mind and temperament he was twice her age. And he seemed to himself to have grown years older since that very same morning when the Indian mail had brought the letter which had been the reason of his visit to his sister.

It had been a terrible disappointment to him, and he had hoped for thorough sympathy from Kathie. Yet again, perhaps it was well that she had not taken it to heart so acutely as he. She was less happily placed under Miss Eccles' trustworthy, but cold and unloving care, than he in the Fanshaw family. And had she been of a more sensitive or less buoyant nature, she might have been in some ways dwarfed and crushed painfully. But she was strong and elastic; so far, her six years of stiff and prim school life had done her no harm beyond leaving her, in several ways,

as much of a 'baby' as when they had first begun. Still, Neville's instinct that it was more than time that Kathie should be in other hands, that the 'womanliness' in her would suffer unless there were some change, was a correct one.

'If only Mrs. Fanshaw could have had her too,' he said to himself, as he had often said before.

But that he knew was impossible. The Fanshaws had four boys of their own, and no daughter, which had naturally led to their taking only boy boarders.

'I don't like to make things worse by writing to mamma that I don't think Kathie is improving,' he went on, thinking. 'I know it must be very difficult for them to pay what they do for us. And Mrs. Fanshaw always says that Miss Eccles' school is far better, though it is old-fashioned and prim, than many of those great, big, fashionable, girls' schools, which cost twice as much.'

Suddenly a thought struck him.

'I don't see why I shouldn't write about Kathie to Aunt Clotilda,' he said to himself. 'She is free now, even though she's poor. She might surely have Kathie with her if papa gave what he does to Miss Eccles. And she's often said she would have had us every holiday if Mrs. Wynne hadn't been so old and queer. I think Aunt Clotilda must be nice—she is so fond of papa. She might at least have Kathie there on a visit.'

And with a rather more hopeful feeling about things in general since this idea had struck him, poor Neville rang at Mr. Fanshaw's door, which he had now reached.

He had met with plenty of sympathy from his kind friends in his disappointment. It was Mrs. Fanshaw who had suggested to her husband to give the boy an hour or two's holiday to go off to see his sister, though not an orthodox day for the two meeting, and who had furthermore promised the invitation which had so delighted Kathleen. But a feeling of loyalty prevented Neville's telling how slightly the bad news seemed to have affected the little girl, and besides this, a sort of instinct that the less family matters are talked of out of the family the better, made him resolve not to say very much more about the matter in the Fanshaw household.

What the bad news was it is quite time to explain.

Neville and Kathleen Powys were the children of an officer in the army. Captain Powys was poor, but not without reasonable hopes of becoming much richer before his boy and girl should have reached the age at which education and the other many advantages which good parents desire for their children, grow expensive and difficult to obtain for those who have very small means. One disadvantage—a disadvantage at all ages—that of separation from their parents, had to be submitted to, however, when Neville and Kathleen were only five and six years old. For at that

time Captain Powys's regiment was ordered to India, and he had, of course, to accompany it.

'Never mind—or, at least, mind it as little as you can,' he said to his wife. 'Let us be thankful they are still so young. By the time they are at an age when it really would matter greatly, we may quite hope to be settled at home again.'

And in this hope the last few years had been passed. It was not an unreasonable hope by any means, as you shall hear. Captain Powys had an old cousin, who was also his godmother, by name Mrs. Wynne. And for many years this lady had openly announced her intention of making him her heir. Only last year she had written to beg him to try to get leave to come home for some months, as she felt she had not long to live, and there were many things she wished to say to him. She undertook to pay all the expenses of this visit for himself and his wife, and the little girl Vida, who had been born since their return to India. And as a reason the more for it, she reminded him that it was high time Neville and Kathleen should see their parents again. Captain Powys, as may be imagined, was only too glad to agree to her proposal, and for the last few months the parents in India and the children at home had been counting the weeks—in Neville's case, indeed, almost the days—till they should meet, when, alas! all these plans were dashed to the ground!

Mrs. Wynne died suddenly, and after her death no will was to be found. In consequence of this, all her property would go to a nephew of her husband's, already a rich man, who did not need it, and, to do him justice, scarcely cared for it. This was the news which Miss Clotilda Powys, the children's aunt, who had lived with the old lady and helped to manage her affairs, had to write to her brother in India. And this too was the news contained in the letter from his father which had so distressed poor Neville.

It was a curious story altogether. Clotilda was completely puzzled. Mrs. Wynne was a careful and methodical person, not likely to have delayed seeing to business matters, and just the sort of woman to have prided herself on leaving everything in perfect order. And a day or two before her death she had given her cousin a sealed envelope, on which was written, 'Directions where to find my will;' saying to her at the same time, 'You will see—all will be right for David.' So Miss Clotilda's mind had been quite at rest, till on opening the envelope, a few hours after the old lady's death, she drew forth a blank sheet of note-paper! Even then, however, she was not completely discouraged. That the will was somewhere in the house she felt certain, for she had often heard Mrs. Wynne say that she would trust no important papers to any one's keeping but her own. And in the presence of the lawyer, Mr. Jones, and of Mr. Wynne-Carr, the nephew, a thorough search was made. Every

cupboard, every bookcase, every wardrobe, every chest of drawers was turned out—nay, more, the walls were tapped, the planks of the floors examined, for it was a very old and quaintly contrived house, to see if there was any secret place where the will could have been concealed. But all in vain. Every other paper or document of importance was found in its place, neatly labelled in the old lady's own handwriting, in her private *secrétaire* in the library. But no will! And even though poor Miss Clotilda went on for days and weeks searching, searching, thinking of nothing else by day, dreaming of nothing else by night, all was useless, and it became evident that there would not much longer be any pretext for preventing Mr. Wynne-Carr's taking possession.

Mr. Wynne-Carr behaved well. He had never expected to succeed, and was not eager about it. He could not, however, help himself—he had a son and grandson—he could not give up the property even if Captain Powys could have been brought to accept it from him. But he told Miss Clotilda to take her time. He gave her leave to stay on in the house as long as she liked, and to continue searching. But as weeks went on, her last hopes faded, and she wrote again to her brother, advising him to make up his mind that the will would never be found. Then Captain Powys wrote to Neville—he had put off doing so as long as he could—telling him all, and saying that even the visit to England must be given up, as he had no money to spare for it, and no

hopes of gaining anything by it. If Miss Clotilda had not succeeded in finding the will, there was no chance that any one else would.

Neville was old enough, and thoughtful enough, thoroughly to understand the whole. No wonder he was troubled and distressed, and disappointed by Kathie's childishness. He wished his Aunt Clotilda had written to him. It would have made it much easier for him to have confided to her his feelings about his sister. It was many years since Miss Clotilda had seen the children, for she had not left Wales for long, and Mrs. Wynne had never invited the children to visit her. She was too old for it, she said, and she had never had children of her own, and did not understand their ways. So Neville and Kathleen had been entirely left to the care of strangers, though Neville had once or twice been asked to spend some holidays at a companion's house, and Kathie was taken every year to the seaside with two other 'little Indians,' for three weeks by Miss Eccles.

But of real happy home-life neither knew anything, except by hearsay. And Kathleen was not the sort of child to trouble herself much about anything which did not actually come in her way.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIPPA'S IDEA.



KATHLEEN was met at the schoolroom door by a little, pale-faced, fair-haired girl, who was just coming out.

‘Oh, Kathie!’ she said anxiously, ‘do be quick if you’re not ready for dinner. The bell’s just going to ring. Have you washed your hands? No? Then let’s go at once.’

‘Why, are you not ready, either?’ said Kathie. ‘There’s no excuse for you, Philippa; you’ve not been called downstairs to see your brother.’

‘I am ready,’ said Philippa. ‘I’ve been ready ever so long. But when you didn’t come at once after Miss Fraser went for you, I was so frightened that I asked if I might go to fetch a handkerchief, and I thought I’d run along the passage to see if you were coming, and to hurry you.’

‘You’re a good little soul,’ said Kathleen condescendingly, ‘but you really needn’t bother about me. I’ve had

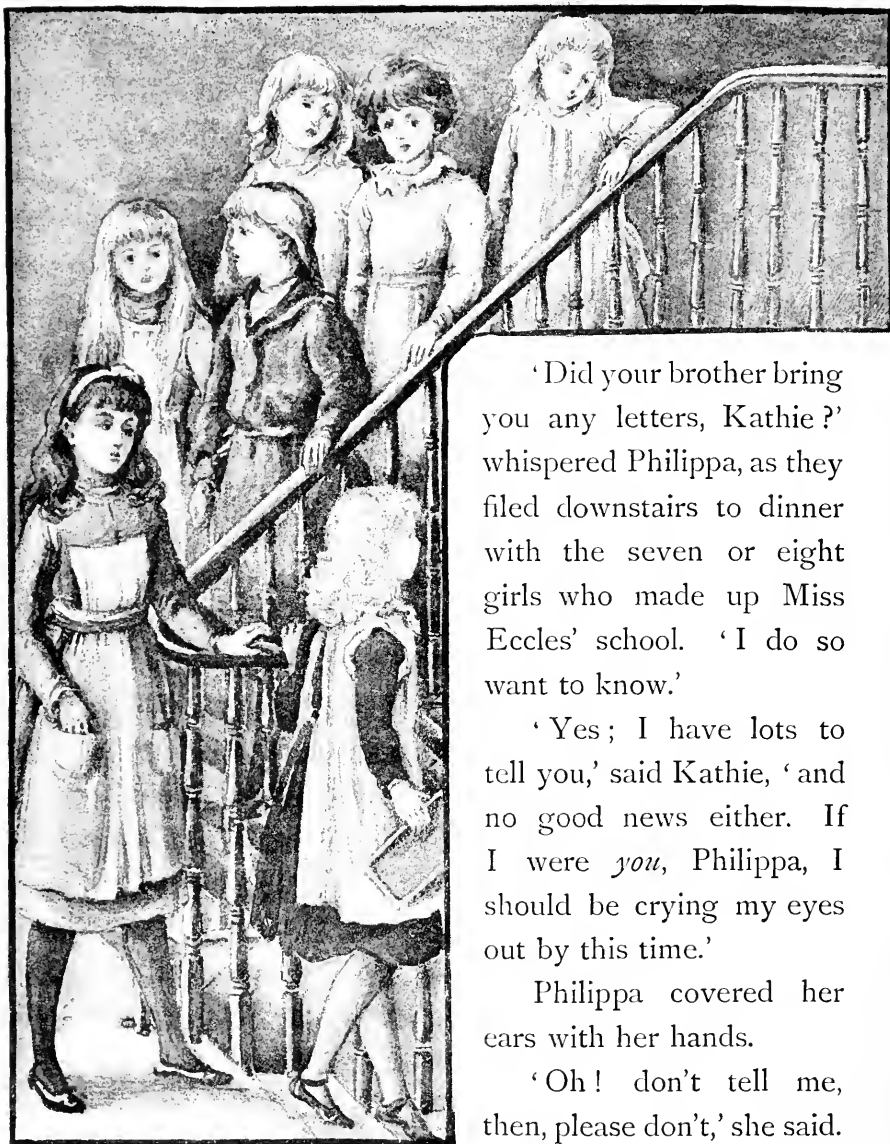
scoldings enough by this time not to mind, I should rather think.'

Philippa looked up at her doubtfully. Kathie's hard, careless way of speaking distressed her vaguely, much as it did Neville, though she scarcely understood it. She was new to school life, and she had had the happiness till a few months ago of never being separated from her mother. So, though she was three years younger than Kathleen, there were some things she knew more of.

'I don't think you should speak that way,' she said. 'It can't be a good thing not to mind. I do think they scold us too much. *Mamma* never scolded at all, though of course she was sometimes vexed with me, only there was always sense in it. But I think there's *generally* some sense in Miss Eccles' scolding. I try to find it out, only it's rather hard,' and her soft eyes filled with tears.

'Come now, Philippa,' said Kathleen, 'don't begin to cry. You'd be ever so much nicer if you wouldn't. There, now; I'm all ready,' and she flung the towel, with which she had been wiping her hands, on to the rail as she spoke. 'Let's race back; see if you can run as fast as I without making any noise. Don't I do it splendidly? There now; the bell hasn't sounded. Won't Miss Fraser be disappointed not to have to scold?'

And it was true that a rather sour look overspread the under-teacher's face as the two children demurely entered the room.



‘Did your brother bring you any letters, Kathie?’ whispered Philippa, as they filed downstairs to dinner with the seven or eight girls who made up Miss Eccles’ school. ‘I do so want to know.’

‘Yes; I have lots to tell you,’ said Kathie, ‘and no good news either. If I were *you*, Philippa, I should be crying my eyes out by this time.’

Philippa covered her ears with her hands.

‘Oh! don’t tell me, then, please don’t,’ she said.

‘If it’s anything sad about your mamma, or anything like that, I shall begin crying: I know I shall, whether you do or not, and then they’ll all see. Don’t tell me till after dinner, Kathie.’

‘I’ve no intention of doing so,’ said Kathleen, smiling rather importantly. ‘I’ll tell you in the garden this afternoon.’

Her smile somewhat reassured the tender-hearted little friend; still more so the fact that Kathleen’s appetite was in no way affected by the news, whatever it was, that she had just heard. There was a gooseberry pudding for dinner that day, and Philippa marvelled to herself when she saw Kathie’s plate sent up for a second allowance.

‘I can’t finish my first helping even,’ she whispered, disconsolately. ‘I can’t help wondering if your mamma’s ill, and it makes me think of *my* mamma. Oh, Kathie!’ she went on, ‘do just tell me it isn’t that your mamma’s ill, is it? Do tell me, or I’ll never be able to finish my pudding, and they will so scold me!’

‘You goose!’ whispered Kathie. ‘No; of course it isn’t that my mamma’s ill, or your mamma’s ill, or anybody’s mamma’s ill.’

‘Miss Powys and Miss Harley *whispering*! I am surprised at you,’ said Miss Eccles’ voice from behind the now diminished gooseberry pudding at the other end of the table.

‘There, now,’ muttered Kathie; and Philippa, feeling that her friend’s reproaches as well as her teacher’s disapproval would be more than she could bear, subsided, and set to work to clear her plate in earnest.

The friendship between these two was rather an odd one. It had been brought on in the first place by a sort of half-contemptuous, half-pitying curiosity, with which Kathleen had seen Philippa’s agony of distress on having to part with her mother. And poor Mrs. Harley, in her bewilderment, had credited Kathie with more feeling and sympathy than the girl was really conscious of.

‘You will be good to her—you look as if you were sorry for her,’ she said, struck by the interest in Kathleen’s pretty bright eyes. ‘*You* know what it is to be separated from your mother.’

‘I—I haven’t seen mamma for a long time,’ Kathie replied, too honest to ‘sham,’ and yet feeling rather ashamed of herself. ‘There are several girls here whose mothers are in India. –But I will be good to Philippa. We’ll all be sorry for her. I suppose it’s worse when one’s as big as she is. I was very little.’

And Mrs. Harley thanked her, and Philippa clung to her, and having given the promise, Kathleen kept it, even though it was sometimes a little tiresome to have to forsake the society of the merry, hearty, older girls, in order to devote herself to the poor little home-sick child. But during

the last few months things had changed. Two or three of the older girls had left, and Kathleen did not care much for those that remained. And by degrees Philippa had grown to some extent reconciled to her new life, and had transferred to Kathleen some considerable share of the devotion with which her loving little heart was running over. And Philippa, young as she was, was a friend worth having; in after-years Kathleen came to see how much she owed to the child's unconscious influence.

The hour in the garden after dinner, and before lessons began again, was the hour of all the twenty-four during which Miss Eccles' pupils were the most at liberty. Before Philippa came it had usually been spent by Kathleen in playing; she was so tall and nimble that she was in great request among the older girls for lawn-tennis, or any other games, and it had been one of her small acts of self-denial—acts showing that, for all her heedless talking and surface indifference, her heart was in the right place—to give up joining in these for the sake of talking or listening to the disconsolate little stranger. But now that Philippa had learnt to understand things better, she would not allow Kathleen to make such sacrifices. Though not strong enough herself for much active exercise, she loved to watch her friend's successes, and her pale face would glow with excitement when Kathie specially distinguished herself. But to-day was to be an exception.

‘You’re going to play lawn-tennis, aren’t you, Kathie?’ said Philippa. ‘I don’t want to play anything; and Miss Fraser doesn’t mind, when it’s so hot that I won’t catch cold. I’ll sit near and watch you.’

‘No, you just won’t,’ said Kathie. ‘I’m not going to play. I know you are dying to hear what Neville came about, and I want to tell it to somebody, and you’re the only person I can tell it to. So let’s sit quietly in the old arbour—nobody will want us, and I’ll tell you everything. You’ll be sorry enough for me, Philippa, when you hear the first bit of it, even though it isn’t nearly the worst. Just fancy’—by this time the two children were settled in the summer-house—‘papa and mamma are not coming home this year, after all.’

Philippa’s blue eyes opened very widely, and a look of consternation spread over her face.

‘Your papa and mamma aren’t coming home?’ she repeated, as if she could not take in the sense of the words. ‘Oh, Kathie!’ and the corners of her mouth went down, and her eyelids began to quiver in a suspicious way.

‘Now, Phil, no crying,’ said Kathleen, sharply. ‘If I don’t cry for myself, I don’t see that you need to do it for me.’

‘I’m so—so dreadfully sorry for you,’ said Philippa apologetically.



‘LET’S SIT QUIETLY IN THE OLD ARBOUR.’

‘Thank you. I knew you’d be. But though their not coming’s a dreadful disappointment, there’s worse than that. It isn’t only that it’s put off, Philippa: it’s given up altogether. I don’t hardly think they’ll *ever* come home now. I believe they’ll stay out there always, till I’m grown up, and then when I’m seventeen or so, I’ll be sent out to them—to a father and mother I shan’t know a bit. Isn’t it *horrid*, Philippa?’

‘But why is it? What’s made them change so?’ asked the little girl.

‘I’ll tell you. Only you must listen a great deal. It’s really rather hard to understand: just like a story in a book, Phil, about wills, and heirs, and lawyers, and all that.’

And in her own fashion, as intelligibly as she could, Kathleen proceeded to narrate the contents of her father’s letter to Neville, and all Neville’s comments thereupon, to her most interested and attentive listener.

‘What a shame it seems!’ was Philippa’s first remark. ‘All to go to somebody that doesn’t need it. How unfair it is! Kathie, if he was really a very good, nice man, don’t you think he’d give it all back to your father?’

‘Papa wouldn’t take it, not from *him*,’ said Kathie indignantly, though, truth to tell, her own first idea on hearing the story had been a similar one; ‘and besides—that other man’s got children, and Neville says there’s some law

that you can't give away what comes to you if you've got children.'

'Oh,' said Philippa, meekly. 'I didn't know.'

'Of course not. How could you know, a little girl like you? Why, *I* didn't till Neville told me,' said Kathie condescendingly. 'But, all the same, that part of it doesn't matter. Papa wouldn't take anything from anybody like that.'

Philippa sat silent for a little while. But though silent, she was thinking deeply. Her eyes were gazing before her, though seeing but little of the objects in view—the prim bit of London garden, with the evergreen shrubs bordering the gravel-walk, and the figures of the girls darting backwards and forwards in their light-coloured frocks, while they called out to each other in the excitement of the game. And the child's lips were compressed as if she were thinking out some knotty problem. Kathie looked at her in surprise and with growing impatience. She did not fully understand Philippa, for in reality the nine years old maiden was in some respects older than Kathleen herself. Her thoughtfulness and powers of reflection had been brought out by living in close companionship with her mother, and the dearth of playfellows of her own age had made her what servants call 'old-fashioned,' quaint, and in a sense precocious.

'What are you going to sleep about Philippa?' said Kathleen at last, irritably. 'I thought you'd have had lots

of questions to ask. It's not every day one hears anything so queer and interesting as what I have been telling you.'

Philippa slowly unfastened her eyes, so to speak, from staring at vacancy, and turned them on her friend. 'It's not that I don't care, Kathie; you might know that, I'm sure. I think it's *dreadful*! I can't bear to think of how unhappy your papa and mamma must be, '*specially* your mamma, just when she'd been planning about coming home and having you with her. I daresay she made a day list—you know what I mean—and that she'd been scratching out every day to see the long rows get shorter. I know,' she added mysteriously, 'I know mammas *do* do that sometimes, just as well as children.'

'I don't think mine would be quite so silly,' said Kathleen disdainfully. 'She must be pretty well used to being at the other side of the world from us by now. For my part, I don't think people should marry if they know they're going to have to live in India—not, at least, till doctors find out some sort of medicine that would keep children quite strong and well there. I do think doctors are too stupid. But still, of course,' she went on, 'I *am* very sorry for mamma, and I'm very sorry for us all. Not quite so sorry for myself, perhaps. I don't think I do mind so very much. I'd feel more disappointed if I couldn't go to the Fanshaws on Wednesday, and come home in a hansom with Neville. I'm made so, I suppose.'

And she flung herself back on her seat with a would-be 'Miller of the Dee' air, which, however, was rather lost on Philippa, who just glanced at her calmly.

'I don't believe you,' she said. 'You're not as bad as you would make yourself out. But I do wonder you haven't thought of one thing, Kathie, you that are so quick and clever. It came into my head the moment I heard it all.'

'What?' said Kathleen carelessly.

'Why, it's what I'd do in your place. I'd settle *to find the will!*'

'To find the will!' repeated Kathie, sitting bolt upright, and staring at Philippa as if she thought the little girl was taking leave of her senses. '*Me* find the will! You little goose! how could I find it when that stupid Miss Clotilda and all the lawyers and people haven't been able to find it? Why, even Neville never thought of such a thing.'

'Perhaps he will, though; and if he doesn't, if I were you, I'd put it into his head. If Miss Clotilda is really stupid'—

'Oh! I don't know that she is—it's just my way of speaking.' Philippa looked rather disappointed. 'I don't know anything about her except that she's an old maid, and old maids are either crabbed or stupid; and they say she's not crabbed,' said Kathie. 'But seriously, Phil, what do you mean? How could I find the will, or even look for it? It

isn't here in London, and very likely it's nowhere at all. Very likely old Mrs. Wynne never wrote it.'

'Oh, Kathie!' exclaimed Philippa, 'I do think you can't have a very good mind to fancy such things. She would have had to be a really naughty old lady to have pretended so, and tricked everybody for nothing. Of course she must have written it; you told me the letter with nothing in it was marked "Directions where to find my will."'

'Ye-es,' said Kathleen, 'so it was. But what then? It seems to me the first thing to do would be to find the paper that should have been in that envelope.'

'Of course,' said Philippa, her face flushing. 'I never thought of that. You see, Kathie, you are quick and clever when you really think.'

'I never said I wasn't,' Kathleen replied composedly. 'But that's the beginning and end of my thinking about this thing. Let's talk about something else now, Phil.'

'No,' said the little girl decidedly. 'I don't care to talk of anything else. Just *think*, Kathie, how lovely it would be if you did find it, and all came right, and your papa and mamma came home to that beautiful place in Wales; you'd invite me sometimes for the holidays, wouldn't you?'

'Of course,' said Kathie heartily. 'I never thought of that. But by-the-by, Phil, you should be glad of this going wrong if you care for me. I'd have been leaving school if it had been all right.'

'I know, said Philippa quietly. 'I did think of that, and of course it would break my heart for you to go. But I'd rather it did break—*quite*,' she went on, as if she understood thoroughly all about the process, 'rather than that your poor papa and mamma shouldn't be able to come home, and you all be happy together at that lovely place.'

'I don't know that it's lovely,' observed Kathie. 'I fancy it's just a funny old-fashioned place. But it's in the country and near the sea—I love the country and the sea—of course it would be awfully nice. It's very good of you, Phil, to care about it all so much. I only wish it would come right. If I *could* find that paper or the will! It wouldn't matter which. If I were *there*, I'd hunt. I'd poke into all sorts of corners, that perhaps Aunt Clotilda has never thought of.'

'Well, I think you should manage to go there,' said Philippa. 'I don't see why your aunt shouldn't ask you to pay her a visit while she's still there, now that the old lady is dead.'

'Yes; I think she might,' Kathleen agreed. 'Any way, it would be a change from that going to Bognor for three weeks that I dislike so. I am so sick of Bognor. And you won't be there, Phil; you're going to your grandmother's.'

'Yes,' said Philippa; 'I didn't much want to go while I thought you were to be here. But if you were going away, I shouldn't mind.'

‘I’ll ask Neville about it,’ said Kathie. ‘He has said something once or twice about wishing I could go to Aunt Clotilda, but I always told him I shouldn’t like it, and that unless papa and mamma regularly *ordered* me to go, I wouldn’t. I do so dislike old maids.’

‘Why, who do you know that’s old maids?’ asked Philippa. ‘Why do you dislike them?’

‘Oh! there’s Miss Eccles—and, after all, I’m not sure that I do dislike her. No, I don’t think I do,’ she went on, meditatively. ‘But there’s Miss Fraser; there now, Philippa, we *may* dislike her—nasty, spying, sharp, spiteful thing!’

Philippa considered. It never occurred even to her to dispute the right of all the school to dislike Miss Fraser—her mind was considering another aspect of the question.

‘But are you sure she is an old maid?’ she said. ‘She can’t be more than twenty. When do old maids begin?’

‘I don’t know,’ Kathie replied vaguely. ‘I don’t think there’s any settled age. I suppose it’s just that some are always going to be old maids. But let’s talk of something nicer, Phil. Let’s plan that place in Wales—Ty-Tig—I can’t say the name of it in Welsh, but I know it means the White House. Let’s plan all about it, how the rooms go, and everything, and fancy you’re coming to stay with us there. Let me see—shall it be haunted?’

‘No, no,’ cried Philippa, with a little scream, putting her

hands over her ears, relapsing suddenly into the sort of plaintive childishness which made her such an inconsistent little person. 'No, no, Kathie. It's very unkind of you to frighten me. I'll *never* come to stay with you if you're going to plan that it's haunted.'

'Then it shan't be,' said Kathie reassuringly. 'Don't be silly, Phil.'

CHAPTER III.

AUNT CLOTILDA'S REPLY.



WEDNESDAY came in due course, and as Mrs. Fanshaw's invitation had been received, and graciously accepted by Miss Eccles for Kathleen, the young lady was ready and waiting when her brother called for her.

'Good-bye, Kathie darling,' whispered a little voice over the balusters, 'and don't forget.'

'No, dear, and good-bye,' Kathleen replied.

'Who was that on the stairs?' Neville asked, when the two were making their way down the street.

'Philippa—Philippa Harley,' Kathie answered.

'The little girl who cries so?' inquired Neville.

'Oh, she's rather left off crying. She's very sensible in some ways,' said Kathleen.

'*That's* sensible,' said Neville. 'Still I don't know that I don't like her for having cried a good deal. I like people to *mind* things.'

He spoke quite naturally, but Kathleen was rather

porcupinish on this subject. She stood quite still, and faced round upon her brother. Fortunately the street was not at all a crowded one.

‘Now, Neville,’ she said, ‘I’m not going to have you go



on again like that about my not caring. I know it's that you mean, and I just won't have it. I care a great deal more than if I sat down and cried about it.'

Neville stared at her.

‘Kathie,’ he said, ‘I wasn’t thinking about you when I said that. I wasn’t indeed. I know you do care when you really think about things. And if you didn’t, it wouldn’t in a way be your fault. You’ve been so alone as it were; nobody except me, and we’ve not been much together after all, to talk about home things to. But don’t be vexed with me, Kathie.’

Kathleen’s face had softened while Neville spoke. She turned and walked on quietly beside him.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘it’s true what you say. I’ve felt it still more since Philippa’s been there. She’s been so much with her mother, and she is so fond of her. It must be dreadfully nice to have a mother you know so well that you can love her like that. Neville,’ she went on, ‘it does seem hard that I should just be getting to feel more like you about it, when there’s no chance of them coming home, and our being with them.’

Neville sighed.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘it does seem hard. All the same, Kathie, I’m very glad you’re getting to feel more that way. Philippa must be a nice little girl.’

‘She’s a *very* nice little girl,’ said Kathie heartily. ‘But she’s funny—she’s such a queer mixture of babyishness and old-for-her-age-ness.’

And then, as her own words recalled some of her conversation with Philippa, she suddenly exclaimed—

‘Neville, are you sure, quite sure, that there’s no chance of things coming right for papa?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Neville in surprise.

‘Do you think there’s no chance of the will ever being found—or the paper telling where it is? The paper that should have been in the envelope?’

‘I should think *that’s* the least likely thing of all—a little sheet of paper! A will’s rather a big thing—at least, generally. Mr. Fanshaw says it’s written on parchment, and that even a short will is rather a bulky thing. That’s why it seems so queer it should be lost. But the bit of paper could easily have been lost. Aunt Clotilda thinks that the blank bit was put in by mistake, you know, so most likely the right bit was torn up long ago. Mrs. Wynne was getting a little blind.’

‘Still,’ persisted Kathleen, ‘as the *will* can’t be found, I think they should have a hunt for the paper. You see, if the will’s rather a big thing, it’s pretty sure they’d have found it unless it had been really hidden. And, besides, Mrs. Wynne’s meaning to leave directions where to find it, shows it wasn’t anywhere to be found easily.’

‘Yes, of course,’ said Neville, surprised at Kathleen’s reasoning powers.

‘Well then,’ she went on, ‘I’d look for the paper. It might be in ever so many places where the *will* couldn’t be. I wonder if they’ve hunted through Mrs. Wynne’s desk and blotting books, and places like that?’

‘I wonder too,’ said Neville. ‘But they’d only laugh at us if we said anything, you see, Kathie, because we’re children.’

‘Yes,’ Kathleen agreed. ‘People are very stupid about children, often.’

Neville did not answer for a moment. Then, ‘Kathie,’ he said half hesitatingly.

‘Well.’

‘I think I’ll tell you something’—but he was interrupted. They had got into a crowded part by this time, and Neville had to catch hold of Kathleen and make a sudden rush for it, to avoid being knocked down by an unexpected hansom appearing round a corner which they had not been observing. ‘There now,’ Neville went on, ‘it would have been very nice if I had got you run over, Kathie. We mustn’t talk where it’s so crowded. Wait till we get into Mayhew Street.’

But when they reached Mayhew Street, at the farther end of which was Neville’s present home, they were overtaken by Mr. Fanshaw himself. So there was no more opportunity for talking privately. And kind Mrs. Fanshaw had arranged a sight-seeing expedition in the afternoon for the two Powys children and two of the other boys. From this they did not get home till tea-time, and after tea there were games in the schoolroom, and then music in the drawing-room when Mr. and Mrs. Fanshaw and the elder boys came up from dinner. It was all very delightful, and

Kathleen enjoyed it thoroughly. But it drove other thoughts out of her head, and gave her endless subject for chatter in the hansom on her way home. It was not till they drew up at Miss Eccles' gate that she suddenly remembered Neville's unfinished sentence.

'What was it you were going to say to me just when that cab came up, this morning?' she asked.

Neville hesitated.

'I'll tell you the next time. It would take too long now. Perhaps it will never come to anything; perhaps you wouldn't like it if it did, and perhaps you'd be disappointed if it didn't. And it's best to say no more about it yet.'

And this oracular reply was all Kathie could extract from Neville before they had to bid each other good-night.

Philippa was a good deal disappointed the next day that Kathleen had no more to tell her.

'You promised to speak to your brother about looking for the paper,' she said.

'Well, so I did,' said Kathie.

'Yes; but what you said was no good. You should have planned with him about going there. It'll be too late soon; once your aunt has left the house you'd never have a chance of going there.'

'Oh, bother!' said Kathleen; 'I've no chance as it is. I don't believe it'll ever be found—the paper or the will either. It's no good thinking any more about it.'

Philippa's face flushed.

'I think you're a very silly girl, and a very selfish one too,' she said. 'I'm sure if there was the least little tiniest bit of a chance of my finding any paper that would do *my* papa and mamma any good, I'd—I'd—'

'What would you do, Miss Unselfish?' said Kathie teasingly.

'I'd run away and dress myself like a little servant so as to get into the house, or—or—anything,' said Philippa.

'And get put into prison for poking about among other people's things. That would be *very* nice for papa and mamma! Your head's far too full of fanciful stories and rubbish!' said Kathleen.

And for some days there was a decided coolness between the friends.

But on the fourth day something happened which quickly set this unusual state of things to rights. A rather thick letter arrived for 'Miss Powys' by the morning post. It was addressed in Neville's clear, boyish handwriting; and as this was at once recognised by Miss Eccles, she gave it to Kathleen without any remark or inquiry. And though there was only a quarter of an hour between breakfast and morning lessons beginning, Kathie managed to gain a pretty fair idea of its contents before taking her place in the school-room. But it was not till the after-dinner play-time in the garden that she was able to tell what the letter contained to her little

confidante. All she had time to whisper to her—for it was a very busy morning—was, ‘I *have* got something to tell you, Phil, so you’re not to look cross at me any more. You will open your eyes when you hear it.’

Philippa opened her eyes wide enough only to know she was *going* to hear it! What could it be? Kathie looked so pleased and excited that Philippa almost fancied news must have come of the will having been found. Of course it would be very nice, she said to herself, *very* nice, if it were so; but still she was conscious of a little feeling of disappointment at the idea. She was rather what is called a romantic little girl; she liked to make up wonderful stories in her head; but this was the first time that she had ever come across in actual life anything to make a really good one about, so, naturally, she felt that it would be quite a pity for it to come to an end too soon. It would be like a book finishing up all in a hurry in the middle. She thought so much about it that she was very sharply reproved by Miss Fraser for inattention and carelessness, which forced her out of her dreams, though the pleasant feeling of having something out of the common to look forward to prevented her taking the scolding much to heart.

And at last—at last, though really it did seem as if the morning would never come to an end—the two friends found themselves together in the arbour again, and Kathleen drew the fat-looking letter out of her pocket.

‘Oh, Kathie,’ Philippa exclaimed, ‘I’m all trembling to know what it is! Only just tell me quick! Is it that the will’s found?’

She could hardly for the moment have said whether she wished the answer to be ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ but she was not long left in suspense.

‘You goose!’ said Kathleen, which was answer of itself; ‘of course not. I do believe you thought it was in this letter. I don’t believe, for my part, it ever will be found. But that’s not the question. What I’ve got to tell you is just what you’ve been wishing for. I—we—Neville and I—are to go to Aunt Clotilda’s for the holidays.’

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Philippa, in a tone of deep satisfaction. ‘Then *did* you speak of it to your brother, Kathie? Were you only teasing me when you said you hadn’t?’

‘No, no. It was done before. I mean Neville had thought of it before. He began to tell me something, and then he stopped; I think he wasn’t sure if I’d like it. He’s not sure now; you’ll see when you read what he says. And to tell you the truth, Phil, if you hadn’t put it into my head about hunting for that paper’—

‘No,’ interrupted Philippa; ‘it was your own thought about looking for the *paper*. I said the will.’

‘Never mind,’ said Kathie impatiently; ‘it’s the same thing. You put the hunting into my head. And, as I was saying, if you hadn’t, I don’t believe I would have wanted to

go there. You see, it's left to my own wishes principally,' she went on importantly. '*That's* sensible of Aunt Clotilda, anyway. There,' and she held out the letter to Philippa, 'you may read it all. Can you make out the writing? If not, I'll read it to you. Neville's writing is plain enough; read it first.'

Philippa eagerly obeyed. Neville's letter was just a short one, sending on to his sister a larger one which he had received from their aunt, and saying how much he hoped Kathleen would like the idea of the visit Miss Clotilda proposed, and which he frankly said he had written to suggest.

'I've read Neville's,' said Philippa; 'but the writing of the other is rather difficult. Please read it to me, Kathie.'

Kathleen unfolded it, and made Philippa come quite close to her.

'I don't want to speak loud,' she said. 'I don't care for the other girls to hear.'

'MY DEAR NEVILLE,'
the letter began,

'I am very glad you wrote to me. I have thought a great deal about you and dear Kathleen since the terrible disappointment which you heard all about from your father. It is very sad for both of you, and perhaps especially so for Kathleen, to be so long separated from your dear parents, and to have now—alas!—such a very uncertain prospect of seeing them again for long. I had already been considering if it would not be possible for you both to spend your next holidays with me here. Mr. Wynne-Carr has—I suppose I



THE AFTER-DINNER PLAYTIME IN THE GARDEN.

must say *kindly*, but I think you are old enough to understand that it is difficult for me to feel grateful under the circumstances—given me leave to stay here till October, when I must go I know not where. But I am very poor. I have for the time a house in which to receive you, but that is about all. All the servants are dismissed already, except old Martha. And I am obliged to live in the simplest way. Then, again, I had a feeling that it would be painful and tantalising for you to come here, and to get to know and love the dear old place which should have been by now your own home. 'I should like you and little Kathleen'—

'*Little Kathleen*, indeed!' said Kathie, with a snort.

'to think it over'—

'Yes; that's sensible of her, isn't it?'

'and to let me know what you feel about it before I do anything in the matter. I am quite sure your dear papa and mamma'—

'Did you ever see such a lot of "dears" as she sticks in? I'm afraid she must be rather a kissey-cry-ey sort of person, Phil.'

'would have no objection to your coming, and if you both think you would like it, and will let me know as soon as possible, I will write to Miss Eccles and to Mr. Fanshaw, and try to get all arranged. I think you could safely make the journey alone, as there is no change from Paddington to Frewen Bay, where you leave the railway, and where I should meet you by the coach. Of course, had things been as we hoped, I should have sent some one to town to escort you, but that, alas! is now out of the question. With love to Kathleen, and hoping to hear from you very soon—Believe me, my dear Neville, your affectionate aunt,

'CLOTILDA WYNNE POWYS.'

'She writes as if she would have sent a couple of powdered footmen for us, doesn't she?' said Kathie. 'I

say, Phil, it won't be very cheerful if she's going to go on groaning all the time over departed grandeur, will it? And I'm rather afraid about the'— Kathleen hesitated. She was in an excited, mischievous mood, and she wanted to shock Philippa by using slang. But she wasn't sure whether the proper expression for what she wanted to say was 'tuck,' or 'grub,' or 'prog,' or no one of the three, so she discreetly changed the form of the sentence. 'I've just a little mis-giving that we shall not have enough to eat,' she went on. 'Do you suppose she'll give us porridge three times a day? I always think of porridge when people speak of living very simply.'

'Porridge is very good,' said Philippa; 'with *cream* I think it's'—

'Heavenly!' put in Kathie. 'Yes, so do I. For breakfast, that's to say. But for dinner and tea too! I warn you, Phil, if we go, and if we're starved, it'll all lie on your shoulders.'

Her voice was so solemn, and she put such an alarming expression into her face, that Philippa looked really frightened, and half ready to cry.

'I don't understand you, Kathie,' she said. 'I wish you wouldn't open your eyes at me like that. I think it's a very nice, kind letter, and I don't see why you turn everything into mocking. I can't think what makes you do it.'

Kathleen's face grew grave.

‘I’m very sorry for vexing you, poor little Phil,’ she said. ‘I won’t do it any more. But you needn’t be vexed at my saying seriously, that I don’t think I’d have wanted to go to Aunt Clotilda’s but for your idea of hunting for the will. I’m sure she’s very unhappy, and I daresay she’d rather not be bothered with us.’

‘You should try to make her happier, then. It’s for all of you she’s so unhappy, poor thing.’

‘Yes, that’s true. And anyway, it’s better than Bognor. I’ll promise to be very good, Phil; I really will. But you *mustn’t* be disappointed if I don’t find the will, for I’m very much afraid I shan’t.’

‘You haven’t patience enough,’ said the little girl. ‘I wish *I* was going there.’

‘I’m sure I wish you were. But it will be nice to see the place, and to find out if our plans about it are something like. I’ll write you long letters to your grandmamma’s, and tell you all about it.’

CHAPTER IV.

AT TY-GWYN.



HIS aunt's letter, though so kind, had caused Neville some disappointment. It was evident to him that there was no hope of her being able to have Kathleen to live with her. And indeed, these coming holidays were probably the only ones they could ever hope to spend with her.

‘Poor Aunt Clotilda!’ thought the boy. ‘It is really very sad for her. Papa has always told us what a good sister she was to him, and of course if they had come home and gone to live there she would always have stayed with us. I wonder what she will do? I wish I were old enough to earn money, somehow, so that we three, aunt and Kathie and I, could live together till papa and mamma come home. It seems a shame for her to have to work, and yet I suppose she’ll have to do something like being a governess or a companion; perhaps she’s too old to be a governess. She’s much older than papa.’

The thought of his aunt seemed to bring out all the chivalry in his nature.

‘When I’m a man,’ he went on thinking to himself, ‘if Kathleen and little Vida are not married, and poor, I won’t marry till I’ve got enough for them to be comfortable. Of course it was different for papa, for he was so sure of Mrs. Wynne’s money. It’s very kind of Aunt Clotilda to want me too to go. I should like to see the place, though it will be rather horrid too to know it should have been ours. I do hope Kathie will like the idea of going,’

All fears on this score were soon put an end to. The very next morning brought him back his aunt’s long letter enclosed in a rather scrawly note from Kathleen, condescendingly expressing her approval of the scheme, the reason of which was, to tell the truth, principally contained in the postscript.

‘We’ll have a good hunt for the will ourselves. I’m sure Aunt Clotilda is rather a goose. I don’t believe she’s half hunted for it. Just think, Neville, *if* we found it!’

And Neville’s face flushed with a momentary enthusiasm as he pictured to himself the delight of such a possibility. But the glow quickly faded again.

‘No, there’s no use thinking of it,’ he said to himself; ‘better not. Kathie mustn’t get it into her head, though I’m glad in one way to see that she has thought about it seriously. But I’m quite sure Aunt Clotilda has done everything that

could be done. Kathie has no business to say she's a goose. Now I can write to her and say we should like very much to go to her. I hope it won't bother her much.'

His letter was sent that very afternoon. But it was not till nearly noon on the following day that it reached its destination. In what Miss Clotilda Powys herself and many of her neighbours, not to speak of old Martha, were already beginning to call 'the old days,' a groom used regularly to be sent from Mrs. Wynne's to the two miles distant post-office, where the letters arrived by mail-cart early in the morning, Now-a-days the White House had to take its turn with the rest of the world in the out-of-the way village, and to wait the good pleasure of old John Parry, who stumped along at his own sweet will, the canvas bag slung across his shoulders, seeing no reason why he should hurry. Nay, more, if there happened to be any piece of work at his own cottage that he was anxious to get finished betimes, the letters might wait—half an hour or so couldn't make such a mighty difference, and he was quite secure that no one in the village would ever notice it or complain if they did. Miss Clotilda Powys was perhaps the only person the least likely to mind whether her share of the post-bag's contents reached her at ten o'clock or twelve. And lately, since the excitement that immediately followed Mrs. Wynne's death had subsided, since there were no more lawyer's letters of advice or inquiry to look for—for everybody by this time had come to believe that either the

will would never be found or did not exist—Miss Clotilda cared little more about post-time than anybody else. She had no heart left to feel interest in the outside world, and she was a woman whose chief interests would always be those of



her own belongings. For she had lived in a small sphere all her life—her one great affection had been for her younger brother, David Powys, the father of Neville and Kathleen; like a stream, dammed on all sides but one, this affection had deepened and strengthened till it had become the one idea of

her life. It is easy, therefore, to understand that Captain Powys was right when he said that his sister was perhaps the most to be pitied of all concerned.

Old Martha had been many years in Mrs. Wynne's household. She knew Miss Clotilda well—better, probably, than did any one else. She had admired her patience with the old lady, her self-denial and gentleness, and she sympathised almost more than any one in the terrible disappointment. And lately she had begun to feel very unhappy about Miss Clotilda. Since she had come to lose hope, the poor lady had grown listless and low-spirited, so that Martha sometimes almost feared she would fall ill, and not care to get well again,

‘I must have deserved it,’ she would say sometimes to the old servant. ‘I fear I have been selfish—caring too much for my own dear brother, and thinking of nothing else.’

‘Oh, miss,’ Martha would remonstrate, ‘how could you ever think so? I’m sure no lady could have been kinder than yourself to all the poor folk about. You’ve never been one to turn a deaf ear to anybody’s troubles.’

‘But in my heart,’ said her mistress, ‘in my heart my one thought has been David, and that cannot be right, for now it seems as if there was nothing left, now that I can no longer plan for his happiness. I don’t know what to do with myself, Martha. I’m getting old, and I am useless; at least, I feel that I shall be useless away from here. I should like to

become a sister, and work among the poor, but I am afraid I should not understand it, away from here.'

'Never fear, miss,' Martha would say consolingly. 'A way will show for those as really wishes to do right. You've done what was your duty well till now. I'm sure no lady knows better how to see to a garden or a dairy; and for poultry, miss, you've quite a special calling. Don't you worry, miss.'

And this she would say, though her own heart was sad. She feared she would have to leave Miss Clotilda, and it was hard to think of going to work among strangers at her age. But she was a truly good and faithful-hearted old woman. She believed that, as she said, no one really anxious to do right will ever be left for long at a loss.

Many a night had Martha lain awake, thinking about the lost will. She turned over in her head every possible, or impossible, place in which Mrs. Wyme could have hidden it. More than once, indeed, she had got up in the dark, and lighted a candle to go peeping into some cupboard or drawer which it had struck her had not been thoroughly turned out. But all in vain. And now she, too, like Miss Clotilda herself and the rest of the world, had begun to think all hope was over.

She was very delighted when the boy Neville's first letter came, for of course she was at once told of its contents. And she saw that it brought a light to Miss Clotilda's eyes, and a

colour to her cheeks, that had not been there since Mrs. Wynne's death.

'There now, missy dear,' said the old servant, for Clotilda, whom she had known for more than thirty years, still seemed a child to her sometimes, 'didn't I tell you it would be shown you what to do? There's that dear little girl, by her brother's account—and an uncommon well-thinking young gentleman he must be—sorely in need of a mother's care; and who could do so well instead of a mother as her own aunt, I'd like to know? There's your work for you, so to speak, miss.'

'But, Martha,' said Miss Clotilda, 'I can't have her to live with me, as Neville hints. Even if David were to give me what he pays for her now—and it would go hard with me to take it—I have no house. And I am not clever enough to teach her;' and again Miss Clotilda's face fell.

'Wait a bit, miss,' said Martha again; 'there's no telling how things may turn out yet. The first thing to do is to have the young lady and her brother for the holidays, so you'll get to know them, and they you. And maybe a way will be shown for you to have them more with you after that.'

'But, Martha,' said Clotilda again, '*can* I have them with me even for the holidays? I've so very little money left. And children have good appetites, and it would be dreadful not to give them nice things and plenty.'

'We'll manage it,' said Martha. 'We've still the use of the garden, and some of the poultry's your very own, miss.'



‘THERE’S YOUR WORK FOR YOU, SO TO SPEAK, MISS.’

And the cow is still giving milk. Mr. Wynne-Carr said nothing about that.'

'No. I think if I wrote to him about the children he would tell me I might use all there is in the place. And we don't need much, you and I, Martha—we need hardly anything that has to be bought, and I can be even more careful till my half-year's money comes,' for she had fifty pounds a year of her own, but that was all. 'If I can make the children happy these holidays, I don't care what happens afterwards,' she added brightly. 'I can always go to one or other of my old friends for a few weeks till I find some kind of situation.'

'To be sure,' Martha agreed.

So the letter was sent which we have read. And then Miss Clotilda and the old servant went into all sorts of discussions as to ways and means. Mr. Wynne-Carr was written to, and in reply he, as Martha expressed it, 'made Miss Clotilda free of the cow and the garden,' and told her to consider *all* the poultry as hers, to eat or sell, as she preferred. That was grand. Martha disposed of several couple almost at once, and proceeded to fatten up others. And when the news of the 'Captain's children' coming to visit their aunt was told to some of the neighbours, several substantial proofs of goodwill were forthcoming. Old Thomas Evans, the principal tenant, begged Miss Clotilda to allow him to send her a fore-quarter of mutton every time he killed a sheep, while the

young people should be with her ; and Mary Jones, the village schoolmistress, humbly presented a beautiful dish of honeycomb. Old Martha was triumphant, and maintained that troubles are often blessings in disguise, as they show us good points in our neighbours which otherwise might never be suspected.

And the next day or two were much more busy and cheerful than their predecessors, though Miss Clotilda felt anxious to hear again from Neville, and in the day or two which had to pass before the boy's reply could possibly come she had time enough to worry herself with all sorts of fears and misgivings.

‘It would be too disappointing if they decided they did not care to come now that we have settled all so nicely, would it not, Martha ?’ she kept repeating. ‘I hope my letter was not too discouraging, so to say. What I said about being so poor now. I trust that will not make them afraid of coming.’

‘What you said, miss, was just the plain truth—that you’d do your best for them, and give them a hearty welcome. You couldn’t pretend things would be as in the old days, or as they *should* be if the Captain had his rights. But don’t worry, miss ; Master Neville’s a sensible young gentleman and his father’s own son, or I’m much mistaken, and the little girl is just a child. It’ll be all right, you’ll see.’

It was, however, very provoking, that the morning Neville’s letter was on its way, the very first day that there

could possibly have been an answer from him, old John should have been particularly late. Twenty times that morning did Miss Clotilda open the front door, and stand gazing along the drive in hopes of perceiving the familiar figure of the old letter-carrier, and at least half as many times was Martha despatched to the cottage at the corner of the road which he *must* pass, to make sure that he had not already done so. To tell the truth, Martha only went once, and there would have been no use in her going oftener, for she explained the matter to her namesake, Martha Price, the owner of the said cottage, and made her promise to send the old man, 'anyways,' to say so, even if there were not a letter.

But nevertheless, every time Miss Clotilda's voice was heard calling 'Martha, you might just run to the cottage,' the cunning old body called out, 'To be sure, miss, to be sure.' And when the inquiry came down the kitchen passage—'Well, Martha?'—'Not yet awhile, miss. Old John's not in sight just yet,' she would reply.

The longest lane has its turning, however, and the longest waiting comes to an end.

It was nearly one o'clock when Parry at last appeared, smiling and complacent, so that Miss Clotilda found it impossible to meet him with the scolding she felt sure he deserved. He'd have been sharper, to be sure, if he'd known the lady was in a hurry for her letter—there was but

the one for the White House—another time if she'd give him a hint a day or two before, he'd see to it she wasn't kept waiting. But she had no patience to listen to his polite speeches, she seized the letter and hurried off with it to her own room to read it in private. Poor loving-hearted Miss Clotilda! Her nerves had been sadly tried of late. She really felt that if the letter were to say they were not coming after all, she might be guilty of bursting into tears, and that it would not do even for Martha to see!

It was all right, however. The first word or two reassured her.

'MY DEAR AUNT,' wrote Neville, 'Kathie and I thank you very much for your kind letter. I have not seen Kathie, but I wrote to her, and we are both sure we should like very much to come. I am very sorry about all the trouble. I am so sorry it should make you poorer too. I should like to be grown-up, and to work hard to help papa and mamma and my sisters and you. It will not make us unhappy to see the place. We shall like to see it. Please write to Mr. Fanshaw and Miss Eccles. Kathie's holidays begin in three weeks, and I could come then too. I am sure we should be all right to come third-class. A boy here, whose people are very rich, goes third with his sister, because his father says it's better than second. Mr. Fanshaw can find the trains if you'll fix the day.—Your affectionate nephew,
'NEVILLE W. POWYS.'

Again Miss Clotilda's voice sounded along the kitchen passage.

'It's all right, Martha,' it said joyfully. 'The dear children are coming. I think I'll just slip on my bonnet and run up

to Mr. Parry's' (*this* Mr. Parry was the vicar), 'and see if he's got a—a clergy list—oh, dear me! what am I saying? I mean a railway-guide, and then if I mark down the best train I can write at once to Miss Eccles and to Mr. Fanshaw. It will save them all trouble, and of course I must choose a train which will arrive in good time at Frewern Bay, on account of the long drive, you see, Martha.'

'To be sure, miss, to be sure,' Martha agreed. 'But you'll have some luncheon first, miss. They'll be at theirs at the vicarage.'

'Very well, Martha,' said Miss Clotilda submissively. She felt far too excited to eat, but still she did not want to delay Martha's own dinner. The calling this mid-day repast 'luncheon' was a pious fiction, for, for many years past, even in the so-called 'old days,' it had been the real dinner. Mrs. Wynne had been too delicate to take a substantial meal late in the day, and now, alas! there were serious reasons why Miss Clotilda should be content with but one such. And with her present economical intention, I am afraid even her luncheon was not a luxurious meal. But the thought of the little visitors for whom they were made sweetened and cheered her self-sacrifices.

'I've been thinking, miss,' said Martha, as she waited upon her mistress, 'that if I was a little saving with the milk this week or two, we might get a pound or so of butter to sell at the market with the chickens next week. I've spoke

to widow Jones about it, and she'll be pleased to sell whatever we like with hers.'

'A very good idea,' said Miss Clotilda approvingly. 'Of course, it's nonsense for me and you to use all the milk. For my part, I don't care about cream in my tea at all. I meant to have told you so. Nor do I care about butter—just now, in the hot weather too. You may save all the milk you can for churning, as far as I'm concerned, only don't stint yourself, Martha, mind.'

Martha murmured something like 'No fear of that.'

But all the same it was scanty milk and no butter that fell to the share of the old servant's tea. Miss Clotilda, too, was satisfied that she herself was practising the utmost economy, though more than once she remarked to Martha that the red cow's milk seemed nicer than ever. 'In my tea I should really not tell it from cream.'

And silly little Kathie all this time never thought and seldom spoke of her aunt except as 'that stupid old maid,' and thought herself, I rather suspect, very condescending for having made up her mind to spend the holidays at the White House.

CHAPTER V.

A GRAVE PREDICAMENT.



IT was a hot, close morning in July when Neville and Kathleen found themselves at Paddington, waiting to start by the ten o'clock train for Frewern Bay. They had rather a long journey before them, longer than it need have been in one sense, for they could not travel by the express as they were to go third-class. It had been decided by all the authorities concerned that as little as possible must be spent upon the railway fares, for there had not, of course, been time to write to Captain Powys, and have his instructions.

Up to the last there had been some uncertainty as to the day of their going. Miss Clotilda had named Wednesday or Thursday in her last letter, saying that if she did not hear to the contrary she would not expect them till Thursday, and would arrange to meet them that day at Frewern Bay. But late on Monday evening came a note from Neville to ask if Kathie could be ready for Wednesday. Mr. Fanshaw, who was to see them off, had an unexpected engagement on

Thursday, and if Wednesday would not do, their leaving must be delayed till Friday. But this would not at all have suited Kathleen. She was eager to be off, and even twenty-four hours more at school seemed intolerable to her. And to Miss Eccles, one day or the other, provided Miss Fraser could guarantee the young lady's packing being completed in time, was the same. Miss Fraser, to tell the truth, was quite as eager to get rid of Kathie as Kathie was pleased to say good-bye to her. Poor Miss Fraser! her sharp face had looked a little more amiable of late, and her voice had had a softer ring. She had the prospect of a holiday at last, after two years' incessant work, for so many of the girls were this year disposed of among their various relations that Miss Eccles had given up the usual visit to Bognor, and the young governess was in consequence to have three weeks to herself. And Philippa Harley was to travel down to Cheltenham this same Thursday under Miss Fraser's convoy.

'Of course I can be ready for Wednesday!' Kathleen exclaimed, when she read Neville's note. 'Wait till Friday, indeed! And you leaving on Thursday, Phil. I should die of dulness before Friday morning.'

'It'll be rather horrid for me on Wednesday,' said Philippa. 'I wish we had been going the same day, as it was settled.'

'Oh, poor Phil,' said Kathleen, ashamed of her thoughtlessness. 'I quite forgot. Never mind, dear; you are so

good, you know. You wouldn't have liked to think of me alone here all Thursday.'

And Philippa's impending tears were thus warded off.

Thoughtful Neville had enclosed a note, ready addressed and stamped, for Kathie to post at once to Miss Clotilda if Wednesday was decided upon. She was also to let him know at once, which she did.

So on Wednesday morning a four-wheeler with some luggage on the top drew up at Miss Eccles' door, and Neville jumped out. Kathleen was ready, of course; she had been ready for half an hour at least. There was nothing more to do except to give Philippa a last hug for the twentieth time, and to tell her not to cry, and to be sure, quite sure, to write.

'And, Kathie, don't, *promise* me you won't, give up looking for the will,' whispered Philippa at the very last moment. 'Oh, how I wish I were going with you! How I would hunt!'

'I won't forget, I promise you,' Kathie replied. 'But don't fancy there's any chance of it, Phil. There isn't, I'm afraid, and you'd only be disappointed. But I'll write to you, darling, I promise you.'

The first part of the journey was performed to the children's entire satisfaction, for they had the carriage to themselves.

'After all,' said Kathie, 'third-class isn't so bad, is it,

Neville? And I'm sure papa and mamma will think it *awfully* good of us to have saved the money.'



'I don't know that they will,' said Neville. 'They will think it sensible—as we're going to be poor it's best to get

accustomed to it. But besides that, if we hadn't come third, we couldn't have come at all.'

Kathleen sat silent for a minute or two.

'Do you really think we are going to be poor always, Neville?' she said. 'Do you think there's no chance of the will ever being found?'

Neville shook his head.

'I don't believe there's the least,' he said. 'I'm sure Aunt Clotilda has looked everywhere.'

Kathleen sighed.

'It does seem too bad,' she said. 'Things don't often happen like that—in that story-book sort of way. I don't see why it should have come to us.'

'I don't see why it should have come to poor papa and mamma—staying out there in India just to get money for us when they'd gladly be at home, or to poor Aunt Clotil'—

'Oh, bother Aunt Clotilda!' said Kathleen impatiently. 'You'll really make me dislike her, Neville, if you keep on pestering so about her. I'm much more sorry for ourselves than for her—she's an old maid, and I don't suppose *she* was forced to travel third-class when she was a little girl.'

'A minute or two ago you thought third-class was very comfortable,' said Neville. 'You change about so, Kathie. I don't understand you.'

Kathleen did not always quite understand herself. She

looked about eagerly as if in search of an excuse for her bad temper.

‘I’m hot,’ she said, ‘and—yes—I’m almost sure I’m rather hungry. I didn’t eat much breakfast, Neville, I was in such a fuss.’

Neville opened the little basket in which their provisions were packed. Miss Eccles—or Miss Fraser rather—had contented herself with some rather thick sandwiches made of cold beef, and a few Albert biscuits. But kind Mrs. Fanshaw had given Neville a little parcel of toast sandwiches—toast and egg—which are much nicer for children and don’t get nearly so dry in hot weather as meat ones; and besides this, she had given him some slices of home-made plum-cake and a few grapes and a little bottle of lemonade, not too sweet—so there was really quite a nice little railway dinner. And when Neville had spread it all out, Kathleen’s spirits got up again, and she did full justice to Mrs. Fanshaw’s good things.

After this refreshment they both got out their books and began to read, but before they had read very long Kathie’s head gave a great bump, and half opening her eyes she discovered she had been asleep. So she shut up her book and propped her head against the corner as well as she could, and settled herself for a little nap, for by a glance at the opposite corner she had seen that this was what Neville had done.

They slept comfortably enough for an hour or more, and very likely, taking into account the sultry weather, they would have slept on still longer had they not been awakened by the train stopping and some one—or more than one—getting in.

‘What a bore!’ said Kathie to herself. ‘Dear me, the carriage will be quite full,’ and in they continued to come. Two women with big baskets, another with two babies, and then two oldish men, of a class above the women apparently, for the latter were evidently simple peasants, returning from market very likely, and chattering to each other in Welsh.

The sound of their queer talk made Kathie a little forget her ill temper at being disturbed; she sat up and listened, and Neville, opposite to her, did the same. But after a while they grew tired of listening to what they could not understand a word of, and they took out their books and read for half an hour or so. At the end of that time the train stopped again, and to their great relief the three women, the two babies, and the two baskets all got, or were got out, and the brother and sister were left alone with the two elderly men. When the train went on again these two began talking to each other in English, though with a curious accent, and now and then some words of what they were saying fell on the children’s ears, though without catching their attention.

Suddenly, however, Kathleen heard a name and then another which made her listen more closely, and looking

across at Neville, she saw that he too was on the alert. The names were those of 'Miss Wynne,' and 'Ty-Gwyn.'

'Yes,' one of the old worthies was saying to the other, 'it is a strange story. She was—was Mrs. Wynne, a good old lady, though she had her ways, but she was not one to play a trick on nobody.'

'No, surely,' said the other. 'That was what I always heard. And she was careful and exact.'

'She had not her match for that. She never forgot a promise, she never but paid all she owed, to a day. No—no—there was no carelessness about her. Why, last Christmas as ever was she came down to see my wife, who was very bad with her rheumatiz just then; couldn't stir hand nor foot, and now she's hearty enough and the poor old lady gone! Well, she came down with a present she had made for her; she was wonderful handy with her fingers, and my wife and she was very old friends. "Here, Ellen," says she, "here's a pincushion I've made for you my own self. You'll keep it, Ellen, and show to your great-grandchildren maybe, as the work of an old woman of eighty-three. It may be the last Christmas I'll be here." And that was a true word, surely.'

'Dear, dear,' said the other old man. Then after a moment's silence he spoke again. 'You don't think now, as she could have had any reason for changing at the last? The Captain's a right sort of a young man by all accounts—he can't have done anything to displease the old lady?'

At this point Kathie and Neville looked at each other. Neville grew very red and Kathie's eyes flashed. Suddenly, before Kathie knew what he was going to do, Neville stood up and went a step or two towards the two old men, who were at the other end of the carriage. They stopped talking and looked at him.

'I—I think you should know,' he began, growing redder still, 'before you say any more of Captain Powys, that I am his son. And if anybody were to say anything against him'—

He had no time to finish his sentence. The older of the two farmers, for such they appeared to be, interrupted him eagerly.

'Say aught against him! Bless you, little master, if you'd waited a minute you'd have heard what I was a-going to say to my friend here. Not that he was a-going to say any wrong, but he's not from our part, and he doesn't know Master David. And so you're Master David's boy, to be sure, and missy there?' And he nodded his head towards Kathleen inquiringly.

'Yes, I'm his daughter,' said Kathie; 'you wouldn't expect to see us travelling third-class, I daresay, but it's because of what you were speaking about, our papa's not getting the property, you know.'

The old man's face grew very sympathetic.

'To be sure,' he said, 'to be sure. And you and master

here,' he went on, 'you'll be going to Ty-gwyn—to Miss Powys's? To be sure.'

'To Miss Clotilda Powys,' Kathleen corrected. '*I'm* Miss Powys.'

'Oh, indeed,' he said, looking rather mystified. 'And miss—the lady from Ty-gwyn—she'll be meeting you at the station, at Frewern Bay, no doubt. It's a long ride from there to Ty-Gwyn.'

'Is it?' said Neville. 'I thought the village—Hafod—was quite near Frewern Bay.'

The farmer shook his head.

'It's a good sixteen mile,' he said, 'and it's going to be a wet evening. But if Miss—the lady from Ty-gwyn, meets you, it'll be all right. She'll have got a fly.'

A very slight misgiving came over Neville. He began to hope Aunt Clotilda *would* meet them. It would have certainly been more satisfactory had there been time to have had another letter from her after their deciding on Wednesday.

'Are we near Frewern Bay now?' he asked the farmer.

'In half an hour we should be there,' said he. Then he went on to tell them that he had been away for a day or two about a horse he was going to buy, and that he was going to stay the night at Frewern Bay with his daughter, who was married to the principal grocer there, and the next morning he should be going home to Hafod.

‘Oh, do you live there?’ exclaimed the children, with fresh interest.

‘To be sure,’ he said. ‘Not a mile from Ty-gwyn. A pretty place it is, and many a time I’ve seen Master David when he used to be there as a boy.’

‘And a sad pity it shouldn’t be his own now he’s a man,’ said the other old farmer, by way of making amends for the speech which had so nearly given offence to Master David’s children.

‘Mr. Wynne-Carr will never live there. He has a fine place already. ’Twill be a pity to see Ty-gwyn let to strangers.’

In this opinion, it is needless to say, Neville and Kathleen thoroughly concurred. Kathleen began to look upon their two old fellow-travellers more indulgently, and to allow to herself that there might be decent people to be met with in a third-class carriage. But they had not time for much more conversation before the train began to slacken in preparation for coming to a stand-still in Frewern Bay station.

Neville’s head was poked out of the window long before this, of course. He had never seen his aunt since he was a baby, and could not possibly have recognised her, but he expected to identify her somehow. And in a little country station this is not so difficult. But he looked in vain. There was nobody who could by any possibility be supposed to be Miss Clotilda Powys. And he drew his head in again,

for the train had quite stopped by now, and it was time to be getting Kathleen out and to be seeing after her luggage.

‘Do you see her?’ asked Kathie, as he handed her down.

Neville shook his head.

‘It’s raining so awfully,’ he said. ‘She may be in the waiting-room’—for the station was only a half covered-in one—‘or, she may not have come herself on account of the weather, and may have sent some one. I’ll see in a minute. Just you get under shelter while I look after the luggage.’

But when the luggage was got, and the train had moved on again, leaving the little station all but deserted, the two children looked round in bewilderment and perplexity. It was too evident that no one had come to meet them. What was to be done? The terribly heavy rain seemed to make it much worse, and above all, the information the old farmer had given them as to the distance of Ty-gwyn from the station. It was impossible, quite impossible to think of waiting; but yet again, where were they to get the fly, or how were they to pay it if they did get one?

‘I have only five shillings over our fares,’ said Neville. ‘Mr. Fanshaw thought it was quite enough, as we were sure to be met. And I should not like Aunt Clotilda to have to pay any extra for us when we know she has so little.’

‘But we can’t stay here all night,’ said Kathleen impatiently; which was certainly true enough. ‘And it’s her

own fault for not coming to meet us. Neville, you must do something.'

Neville looked round in a sort of despair. There were two or three vehicles still standing just outside the gate of the station. A cart or two, and a queer sort of canvas-hooded van, into which the porter was hoisting some parcels, though it seemed already pretty full of sacks of flour or grain of some



kind. Neville opened his umbrella and went to where these carts were standing, looking about him for some promising sort of person to apply to in his distress.

'Can you tell me,' he began to the porter, but the porter was shouting in Welsh to the man in the van, and did not hear him. Neville thought he had better wait a minute, and he stood still, shivering with cold and vexation, the rain

pouring down as surely never before rain had poured. Suddenly a voice beside him made him turn round; it was that of the old farmer, who had till now been engaged in the stationmaster's room, talking about the horse which was coming the next day.

'Is the lady not come? Is there no one to meet you?' he asked.

'No, indeed,' said Neville, 'and I don't know *what* to do.'

The old man looked sorry and perplexed, but Neville's face brightened at having found a friend. Just then the porter emerged again from the van.

'Hi, John Williams!' the farmer called out, and then followed some colloquy in Welsh, amid which Neville distinguished the words 'Hafod' and 'Ty-gwyn.'

The farmer turned to the boy.

'This is the Hafod carrier,' he said. 'He is going there now. He is very full, but he says as it is for Ty-gwyn he will make a push and take you and the young lady. But he can't take your boxes, not to-day. Still, it's a chance to get him to take yourself, and if you can make shift to do till to-morrow'—

'Of course,' said Neville; 'it's the only thing to do, and thank you very much indeed, Mr.'—

'John Davis, sir, John Davis of Dol-bach, if you please.'

'Mr. Davis,' continued Neville. 'Kathie,'—for by this time Kathie's anxiety had drawn her out into the rain too,

—‘you hear?’ And he rapidly explained the state of matters. ‘If it hadn’t been for Mr. Davis, the carrier wouldn’t have taken us.’

‘No,’ said the farmer, looking pleased. ‘I can’t say as I think he would,’

But Kathleen could not join in thanking him. She was tired and cross, and not a little annoyed at having to make their appearance at Ty-gwyn in such ignominious fashion.

‘It’s really a *shame* of Aunt Clotilda,’ she said. ‘I do wish we hadn’t come. I hate Wales already.’

CHAPTER VI.

THE WHITE HOUSE AT LAST.



NEVILLE and the old farmer and the carrier all helped Kathleen up into the van, where John Williams had made her as comfortable a place as he could on the bench that was fixed at one end, with some of the sacks to lean against, and some to put her feet upon. Neville undid his railway rug and wrapped it round her, for the rain had made the air very chilly. The trunks were given into the charge of the porter to be fetched the next day, as Miss Clotilda might direct, and with repeated thanks from Neville to the old farmer, and a cordial shake of the hand at parting, off they set.

At another time, on a fine day perhaps, and not at the end of a tiring railway journey, Kathleen might have found it amusing. And as a rule, she was far merrier and high-spirited than Neville, though, to see them now, one would scarcely have believed it. But Neville had learnt to think of others more than of himself. *There* was the difference.

Kathleen could be bright and laughing when all went well with her, but it never occurred to her that it may be a duty to be cheerful and even merry when one is *not* inclined to be so, so she just yielded to her feelings of fatigue and depression, and sat silently in her place, thinking herself, to tell the truth, very good indeed not to grumble aloud. Neville did his best. *He* was tired too—tired and cold, for he had given his rug to Kathie, and hungry, perhaps hungrier than Kathie, for she had had the lion's share of their dinner. He was anxious and uneasy as well,—blaming himself for not having decided to wait till Friday, by which day there would have been time for an answer from their aunt,—blaming himself vaguely for the whole affair, which he felt from first to last had been his doing. And he was afraid as to what might yet be before them. It seemed impossible that Miss Clotilda should not have got the letter fixing for Wednesday. So what could be the matter? Had she fallen ill? Had Mr. Wynne-Carr suddenly changed his mind, and turned her out of the house? What might they not find when they got to Ty-gwyn? If, indeed, they ever got there! It did not seem very like it just then, certainly. They were going up a hill at a foot's pace, and they seemed to have been doing so, with very rare intervals, ever since they left the station. How the van lurched and jolted! and, oh, how it did rain!

‘Kathleen,’ said Neville timidly.

‘Well,’ she replied, in a very unpromising tone. It was

so dark in the depths of the van—and, indeed, it was getting dusk outside already—that they could scarcely see each other's faces.

‘I’m so very sorry for you, Kathie,’ Neville went on. ‘I’m afraid it’s somehow my fault.’

‘It’s no good saying that now,’ Kathleen replied, and her voice sounded a little mollified. ‘Of course it isn’t your fault. It’s all Aunt Clotilda. Neville, I’m sure she can’t be nice. If she had had anything to gain by hiding it, I declare I should have believed she herself had hidden the will—or burnt it, or something. Just *fancy* her letting us—her brother’s own children—arrive like this! I daresay it was just selfishness, because it was such a bad day, that kept her from coming.’

‘Oh, Kathie!’ said Neville. He felt sure in his heart that Miss Clotilda was not the least like what Kathleen said, but in her present humour he knew that it was worse than useless to contradict or even disagree with his sister. ‘I wish there was something to eat,’ he said. ‘If we could but have had some tea at the station, but there was no sort of refreshment-room.’

‘Wales is horrid,’ said Kathleen, with great emphasis. ‘If papa had got that place I should have made him sell it.’

‘I do wish the man would drive a little faster,’ said Neville, rather with a view to changing the subject, as he could not agree with Kathie.

The wish in this case proved father to the deed. Scarcely

had the words passed his lips when, with a crack of his whip and some mysterious communication to his horse in Welsh, Mr. John Williams's van began to move forward at what, in comparison with their former rate of progression, seemed to the children break-neck speed. For a minute or so their spirits rose.

‘We’ve got up the hill now, I suppose,’ said Neville cheerily. ‘If we go on like this we’ll soon be there.’

But an exclamation from Kathie—‘Oh, Neville! I shall die if we go on like this. It does shake me, and knock me about so. I’m all black and blue already!’—made him change.

‘I’m *so* sorry, Kathie,’ he repeated. ‘Stay; is there nothing I can put on the seat to make it softer? Or supposing you sit right down among the sacks? I do think that would be better.’

It did seem so for a little while. But, after all, there was not much need for the precautions. Scarcely was Kathie settled among the sacks when the jogging and rattling came to an untimely end, and the slow grind and creak began again. Another hill, doubtless. Alas! it was so—another and yet another; the bits of level road seemed so few and far between, that long before the end of the journey Kathie would have borne the jolts and the bruises with philosophy, just for the sake of feeling they were getting over the ground.

It grew into a sort of nightmare—the still pouring rain,

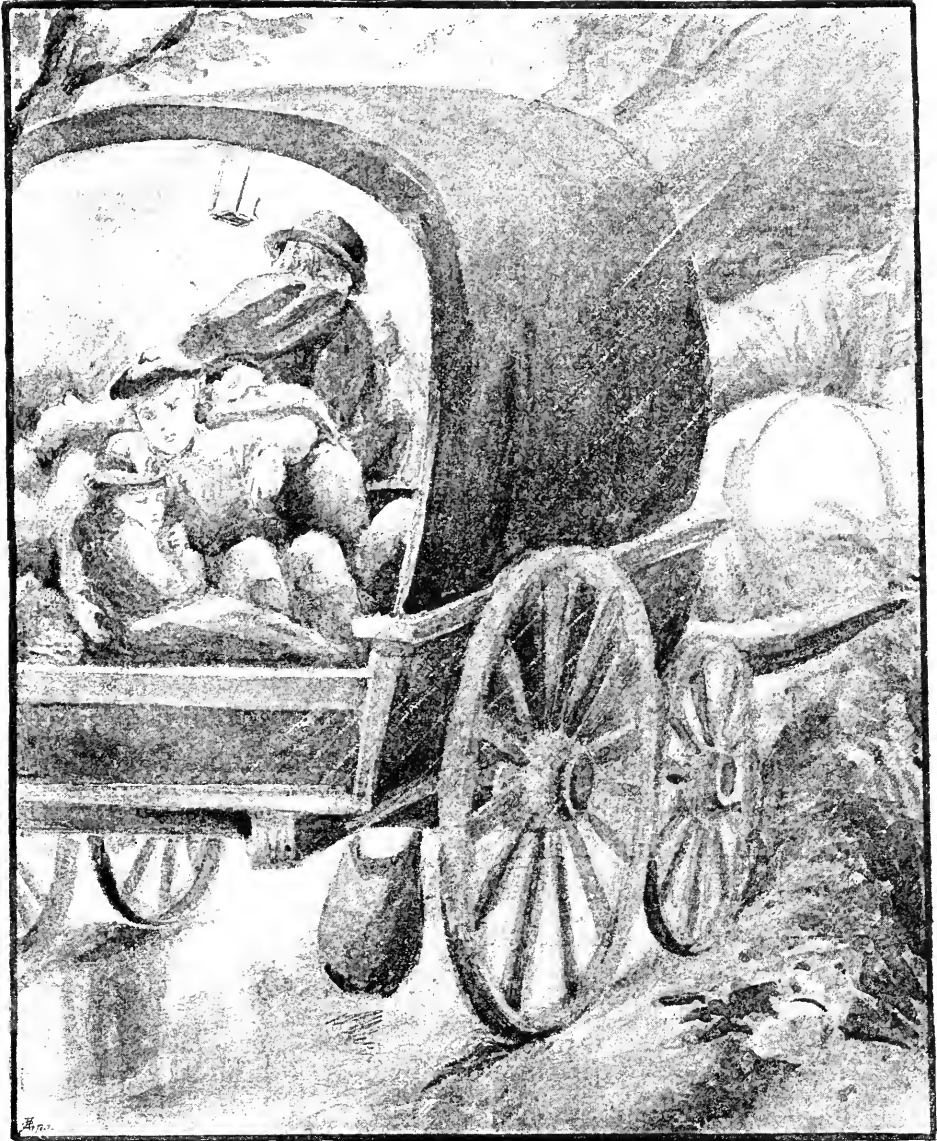
the darkness, just rendered more visible by the faint flicker from the lantern which John Williams had now lighted, and which hung from the top of the van in front, the creaking and groaning of the wheels, the queer sounds Williams addressed from time to time to his horse—it came to seem at last to the children, as they every now and then fell asleep in a miserable half-awake kind of way, only to start up again giddy and confused—it came to seem as if they had *always* been grinding along like that, and as if it would never come to an end.

‘Neville,’ whispered Kathie more than once,—a very subdued Kathie now, far too worn out to be cross even,—‘Neville, I feel as if I should *die* before we get there.’

Neville did all he could. He sat down on the floor of the cart, and took Kathie half into his arms, so that she could lean her head on his shoulder and not be so bumped, for every now and then they would go quickly for a few minutes, and Kathie was too weak and stiff now to be able to hold on to anything. In this way she managed to get a little sleep, and at last, *at last*, John Williams grunted out from the front of the van,

‘Close to, now, master. I’ve come round by Ty-gwyn a-purpose, afore going through the village.’

And in a few minutes he drew up, and got down to open a gate. Then on they went again, slowly and softly. Neville could feel they were on a gravel drive, though it was far too dark to see anything. How Williams had found



HE SAT DOWN ON THE FLOOR OF THE CART, AND TOOK KATHIE HALF INTO HIS ARMS.

his way in the pouring rain, with only the flickering light of the lantern, was really wonderful.

The drive seemed to be a long one, and the wheels made very little sound on the soft slushy gravel. When they stopped altogether, Neville would not have known they were near a house at all, but for what the man had said. There was no light visible, no sound, not even the barking of a dog to be heard, nothing but the drip, drip of the rain.

Kathleen sat up—the stopping had awakened her.

‘Where are we?’ she said. ‘Are we, oh, are we there?’

But before Neville had time to reply she began to tremble and shake. ‘Oh, Neville,’ she said, ‘we can’t be there. It’s all dark. Oh, I believe we’re in some dreadful forest, and that the man’s going to murder us.’

Fortunately, John Williams was out of the van by this time. He had got down and was fumbling about to find a bell or a knocker; but when he reached up to unhook the lantern, finding it impossible to see anything without it, Kathie almost screamed. It was all Neville could do to quiet her, and at last he had to speak quite sharply.

‘Be quiet, Kathie,’ he said. ‘They will be opening the door and will hear you. It’s all right. Don’t be silly.’

And gradually she grew calm, and sat anxiously listening. It was some minutes before John Williams’s loud knocking brought any response. And no wonder—Miss Clotilda and Martha had been comfortably asleep for the last three if not

four hours, for it was now one o'clock, the heavy roads having made the journey from Frewern Bay quite a third longer than usual for the carrier's cart, and their dreams were undisturbed by visions of any such arrival as had come to pass.

'I do trust it will be fine to-morrow,' were Miss Clotilda's last words ere she went off to bed. 'It would be such a cheerless welcome for the dear children if it were such a day as this has been, even though Mr. Mortimer is kindly sending the covered waggonette. Wake me early, Martha. There are still several little things to see to, and I must start by twelve. It will take more than three hours to Frewern Station with the roads so wet—and the horses should have three or four hours' rest, he said. The train is due at seven.'

'But it's often late, miss. You mustn't worry even if it's half an hour or more late. I'll wake you in good time, never fear.'

They were both tired and slept soundly, for they had been working hard at all the preparations for the expected guests. It was Miss Clotilda who first heard through her sleep the loud knocking at the door. She sat up in bed and listened; then, as John Williams had for a minute or two desisted, to wait the effect of his last volley, she lay down again, thinking her fancy had deceived her.

'A small sound seems so loud through one's sleep,' she said. 'I daresay it was only the tapping of the branches

against the window. Besides, what else *could* it be? Dear, dear, how it does rain!’

But scarcely had her head touched the pillow, when she again started up. There was no mistake this time—somebody was knocking, *banging* at the front door. Miss Clotilda’s heart was in her mouth, she could scarcely speak for trembling when she found her way to Martha’s door! Good old Martha—she had heard it too now, and in an incredibly short space of time made her appearance in a much less eccentric costume, by the way, than Miss Clotilda.

‘I’ll see who it is. Don’t ye be frightened, miss. Just stay you at the stairs-top till I call out.’

But Miss Clotilda, in her old-fashioned flowered muslin-de-laine dressing-gown, and lace-frilled nightcap, followed tremulously behind; she was only half-way downstairs, however when Martha was at the door.

‘Who’s there? Speak out, and say who you are and what you want—waking up decent folk at this hour of the night,’ shouted the old woman, as if the unseen person behind the door, *could* have told their business before.

‘It’s me, John Williams, carrier,’ a gruff voice replied. ‘And you should know what I’ve brought you—a young gentleman and lady for Ty-Gwyn.’

He spoke English, as Martha had done so. The question and reply were therefore quite intelligible to poor Miss Clotilda.

'Oh, Martha!' she exclaimed, with something between a scream and a sob, 'the children! *What* an arrival!—oh dear, dear—what a disappointment!'

She stood there half wringing her hands, till Martha gently pushed her towards the stairs.

'Up with you, miss—get yourself dressed as well as you can, not to let them see you like you are—you make yourself look sixty with them caps. I'll take them into the kitchen and make up a fire, and then I'll call you. It'll be all right; but bless me,'—'*pless* me,' she really said with her funny Welsh accent,—'how ever has there been such a mistake?'

She was busy unbolting and unbarring by now, and Miss Clotilda had disappeared. There was but one candle in the hall, but to the children's dazzled eyes it looked at first like a blaze of light. Neville was already on the doorstep, and somehow or other Kathleen was got out of the van without falling. Both started when they caught sight of Martha

'Can *she* be Aunt Clotilda,' whispered Kathie, feeling that if it were so it would but be of a piece with everything else. And for a moment or two even Neville felt some misgiving.

'Are you—? We are'—and again he hesitated.

'To be sure, to be sure. Your aunty 'll be down in a moment, sir; but to be sure there has indeed been some great mistake. Now, John Williams, good-night to you, and off with you. 'Tis no time for talking.' She added some-

thing to the effect that he might call the next day to be paid, but as she spoke Welsh, the children did not understand.

‘I can’t have him bothering about,’ she said, as she closed the door.

‘But our trunks,’ said Neville. ‘They’re left at the station ;’ on which Martha opened the door again, and began scolding the poor man for not having told her so.

‘It wasn’t his fault,’ said Neville, who could tell by her tone that poor John Williams was getting small thanks for his good-nature in bringing themselves, though without their luggage ; ‘he only brought us because we didn’t know what else to do.’

And in the end it was settled that the carrier should call the next morning for orders about the trunks.

Then Martha led the children into the kitchen.

‘You’ll excuse it,’ she said. ‘The fire will soon light up again, and you must be near dead with cold—dear—dear !’

She bustled about and soon got a little blaze to show. Kathie had sunk down on one of the old-fashioned wooden chairs, too tired to speak, almost to think, when a little sound made both her and Neville look round. A figure was standing in the doorway, peering in with anxious face and short-sighted eyes,—a tall, thin figure in a dark dress and with smooth dark hair, and a gentle voice was saying—

‘Are they here, Martha ? My poor dear children ! Are they really here ?’

Neville darted forward.

‘Aunt Clotilda!’ he exclaimed.

In a moment her arms were round him, and she was kissing him fondly.

‘Neville,’ she said, ‘my own dear boy! David’s boy! And where is little Kathleen? Oh, my poor children! What an arrival!—what a journey! How can I have made such a mistake?’

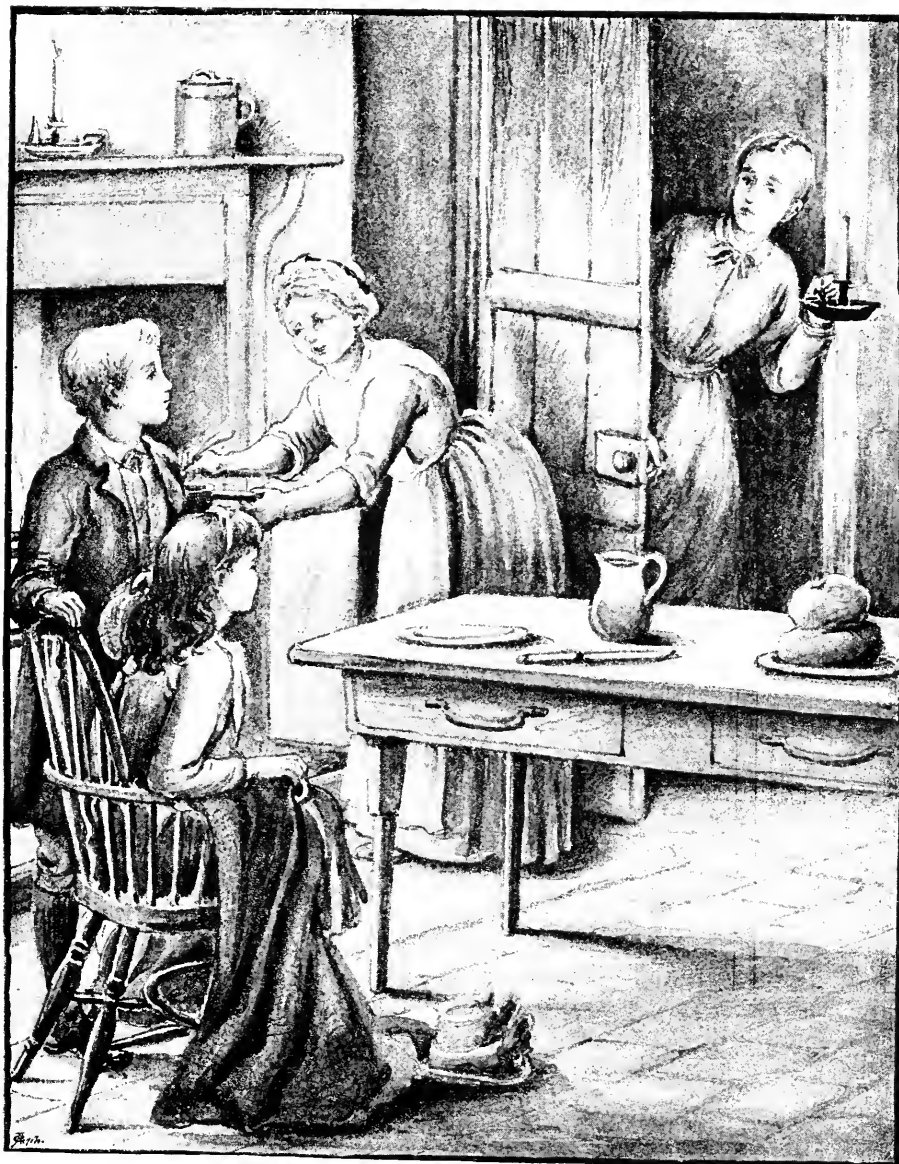
‘Kathie,’ said Neville, and Kathleen slowly got up from her seat and came forward. ‘She is half dead, Aunt Clotilda,’ said Neville apologetically. But Miss Clotilda wanted no apologies. Her heart was far too unselfish and tender to think of anything but the children themselves.

‘Kathleen!’ she exclaimed. ‘Can this be little Kathie? Why, my darling, you will soon be as tall as your old aunt. But all the more you must be dreadfully tired—you cannot be very strong, my dear, growing so fast. Oh, I shall never, never forgive myself. What can we give them to eat, Martha?’

Martha was already concocting something in a little pan on the fire.

‘I’m heating up some milk, miss, and I’ll have an egg beat in a moment, and we’d better add a spoonful of sherry wine. And there’s the plumcake, or some nice bread and butter.’

‘Which would you rather have, dear children?’ said Miss Clotilda.



A FIGURE WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY.

Neville decided in favour of bread and butter, and though Kathleen said she was too tired to eat, she succeeded in the end in getting through two good slices of the delicious home-made bread and fresh butter. Thanks to this and the cup of hot milk, her spirits began to revive, and she even got the length of smiling graciously when poor Miss Clotilda's self-reproaches grew too vehement, and assuring her aunt that she would be all right again to-morrow. Indeed, it would have required a much harder heart than childish, impulsive Kathie's to have resisted any one so affectionate and devoted as their father's sister, and already Neville's eyes sparkled with pleasure as he said to himself it felt almost like having a mother again.

Then old Martha, who had been busy up-stairs, came back to say the rooms were ready,—so far ready, that is to say, as they could be on such short notice.

‘Not but that they were *nearly* ready,’ said Miss Clotilda, as she led the way; ‘we were looking for you to-morrow without fail. But it was all my fault for saying I would expect you on Thursday if I did *not* hear to the contrary. I should have asked you to write again.’

‘But I did write,’ cried Neville. ‘I wrote at once, and sent on the letter to Kathie to post. You should have had it yesterday morning.’

‘Yes,’ said Kathie, ‘I—I gave it to Miss Fraser with my note to Neville, saying, that I could be ready on Wednesday.’

You got my note, of course, Neville. And I—yes, I am sure I gave the one for Aunt Clotilda to be posted at the same time.'

But Aunt Clotilda had never got it. So, *she*, at any rate, was undeserving of all the blame Kathleen had been heaping upon her in the last few hours.

'It must be that careless old John Parry,' said Miss Clotilda. 'I must speak to him in the morning. No doubt he will be bringing the letter, and say it had been overlooked or something. And, my dear children, you must forgive all deficiencies. I had arranged all so nicely. Our neighbour, Mr. Mortimer, was to lend me his covered waggonette to go to meet you in. It is too provoking!'

There were no deficiencies, however, so far, that the children were conscious of, excepting the want of their luggage. Their rooms were charming — so quaint and country-like, with a pleasant odour of lavender and dried rose leaves pervading everything. And Miss Clotilda got out her keys and opened an old wardrobe in Kathie's room, whence she chose a little nightdress of the finest material trimmed with 'real' lace, which Martha aired at the kitchen fire by way of precaution against damp, though the whole house was so dry, she assured them, that such care was really not necessary.

'It is one of Mrs. Wynne's—one of a set that she never wore,' explained Miss Clotilda, 'and it will be just about

right for you, Kathie dear, for, tall as you are, you will have to grow some inches yet to be up to *me*. Mrs. Wynne was quite one of the old school ; she had linen enough laid by to have lasted her another twenty years. And Mr. Wynne-Carr wishes all such things to be considered mine,' she added, with a little sigh, ' so I am free to give you the use of it, you see.'

This was the first allusion to the great disappointment. Tired as she was, Kathie could not help thinking of it as she was falling asleep. And her dreams were haunted by fancies about the lost will — it turned up in all sorts of places. The queerest dream of all was that she found it boiling in the pan in which Martha had heated the milk !

CHAPTER VII.

BREAKFAST IN BED.



NOTWITHSTANDING her great fatigue, it was very early the next morning when Kathleen woke. At first she could not remember where she was, then a slight aching in her head and stiff pains in her legs reminded her of the long and trying journey of the day before. Now that it was over, however, it really seemed like a dream.

And one glance towards the window, of which the blind had only been half drawn down, made it almost impossible to believe in the darkness and dreariness of their arrival the night before. The rain was gone; the sun, though it could not be more than six o'clock, was shining brilliantly in an unclouded sky. From where Kathie lay she could see the fresh green leaves of the trees as they moved gently in the soft summer air; she could faintly hear the birds' busy, cheerful twitter, as they flew from branch to branch.

'Oh, I do love the country!' thought the little girl, with a sudden feeling of warmth and joyfulness in her heart. 'I

do wish—oh, how I do wish it were going to be our home!’

Then there returned to her the remembrance of Miss Clotilda’s last words the night before. The cupboard door had not been quite shut, and it had gradually swung open, revealing piles of linen neatly arranged on one shelf, on another various dresses folded away, and on a lower shelf, which Kathie could see into more clearly, some rolls of canvas, bundles of Berlin wool, and in one corner two or three square-looking objects of various colours, which puzzled her as to what they could be.

‘I will ask Aunt Clotilda,’ she thought. ‘I daresay she will show me Mrs. Wynne’s things. Some of them must be very old and curious. What a funny room this is!—all corners, and the window such a queer shape! I feel quite in a hurry to see all the house. I daresay it is very nice—the hall and the staircase seemed beautifully wide last night, and the steps were so broad and shallow. But, oh dear! I wish my legs didn’t ache so! Poor Aunt Clotilda! I am very sorry I called her stupid, and all that. She is so kind.’

But in the midst of all these thinkings she fell asleep again, and slept for more than two hours. When she woke she heard a cuckoo clock outside her room striking eight.

‘Dear me!’ she said to herself; ‘how late it is! and I meant to be up so early;’ and she was just beginning to get out of bed when a soft tap came to the door.

‘Come in,’ said Kathleen; and in came Aunt Clotilda, her kind face and gentle eyes looking brighter and younger by daylight, and behind her, Martha, carrying a tray covered with a snow-white cloth, on which was arranged a most dainty little breakfast for the young lady, whom Miss Clotilda evidently intended to pet a great deal to make up for yesterday’s misfortunes.

‘Oh, aunty,’ said Kathie, ‘I was just going to get up. I am so sorry to give you so much trouble,’ and she lifted up her face to kiss Miss Clotilda.

‘No, no, my dear,’ her aunt replied. ‘You are to rest to-day as much as you like. Neville is up, and he and I have had our breakfast. He peeped in an hour ago, and saw you were fast asleep, as I was glad to hear. It is just nine o’clock, so I thought you must be getting hungry.’

‘Nine o’clock!’ Kathleen repeated. ‘Why, I thought the cuckoo struck eight.’

‘He is a lazy bird,’ said Miss Clotilda smiling. ‘He is always an hour behind. I must get him put right—at least,’ she went on, correcting herself, ‘I meant to have done so.’ It is not worth while now. Now, dear, see if we have brought you what you like for your breakfast.

‘It is delicious!’ said Kathleen. ‘I could live on the bread and butter alone, without anything else. And honey! Oh, how lovely! Aunt Clotilda, I have never been so petted before,’ she burst out, ‘never in all my life. How very good



'IT IS DELICIOUS' SAID KATHLEEN.

you are! Do you know I've been more than six years at school without ever having what *I* call a holiday till now? Do kiss me, aunty.'

Kathie's heart was fairly won. There were tears in Miss Clotilda's eyes as she stooped to kiss her.

'But they are not unkind to you at school, dear?' she said. 'If you are ever ill, for instance.'

'Oh, no, they are kind enough; but it's different—not the least like *home*. I can understand better already what other girls who can remember their homes meant when they said so. Philippa Harley, you know, aunty—oh no, of course you don't know; but I'll tell you about her. She has always been with her mother till lately, and she was always saying how different *home* was.'

Martha had by this time disappeared. Miss Clotilda sat down by the bed-side, while Kathie proceeded to eat her breakfast, chattering in the intervals.

'You make me very happy, dear Kathie, when you say you have already a home feeling with me,' said Miss Clotilda—'very happy, and,' with the sigh that Kathleen was at no loss to translate, 'very unhappy.'

For a few moments neither spoke. Then Kathleen began again.

'Aunty, even though the house isn't going to be yours any more, or ours, you'll show us all the things in it, won't you?'

‘Certainly, my dear. I want you to know it well, and to remember it always,’ Miss Clotilda replied.

Kathie’s glance just then fell on the lace frills of her night-gown, and thence strayed to the half-open cupboard.

‘What are those queer-looking square things of different colours in there, aunty?’ she asked.

Miss Clotilda’s glance followed hers. Just at that moment Neville put his head in at the door, and asked if he might come in. His face beamed with pleasure when he saw Kathleen and his aunt chatting together so ‘friendlyly.’

‘Those things in the cupboard?’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘Oh! they are some of Mrs. Wynne’s pincushions. I wrapped up the new ones—one or two she had just finished, poor dear, when she was taken ill—and those are some old ones that were to have been fresh covered. I have lots of beautiful pieces of old-fashioned silk.’

‘Oh, how nice!’ said Kathleen. ‘I hope you will let me see them, aunty. But please tell me’—

At that moment, however, Martha came to the door to say that John Williams had called for orders about fetching the trunks from the station.

‘He must have some writing to show, he says,’ said the old woman. ‘But he’s so stupid—maybe he doesn’t understand.’

‘It’s better, perhaps, to give him a note to the station-master,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘I’ll come and speak to him.’

‘I’ll write the note,’ said Neville running off.

‘Aunty,’ said Kathie, as Miss Clotilda was preparing to follow him, ‘mayn’t I get up now? I’m only a little stiff, but I’m not at all tired; and I’m in such a hurry to see the house, and the garden, and everything.’

‘Very well, dear,’ her aunt replied. ‘Martha will get your bath ready. Can you manage with the things you have till your trunk comes this evening?’

‘Oh, yes,’ said Kathleen. ‘My frock did not get wet at all. It’s only rather crushed. And I brought my house shoes in my hand-bag. Philippa made me; she said it was such a good plan.’

‘She must be a very sensible little girl,’ said Miss Clotilda.

‘She’s a dear little girl every way,’ said Kathie. ‘I’m sure you’d like her *dreadfully*, aunty.’

She was feeling very cordial to Philippa this morning, thinking how much the little girl had tried to influence her to come to Ty-gwyn.

‘But for her,’ thought Kathleen, ‘I’m not at all sure that I would have come. I was so sure I shouldn’t like Aunt Clotilda.’

As soon as she was dressed she ran off in search of Neville, who was ‘somewhere about,’ old Martha told her. She found him in the garden, and together they began their explorings. By daylight the White House was far from the desolate-looking place they had fancied it the night before.

It was a long house, built half-way up a gentle slope, and the entrance was, so to speak, at the back. You did not see anything of the pretty view on which looked out the principal rooms till you had crossed the large, dark-wainscoted hall, and made your way down the long corridor from whence opened the drawing-room and library and dining-room, all large and pleasant rooms, with old-fashioned furniture, and everywhere the same faint scent, which Kathleen had noticed more strongly up-stairs, of lavender and dried rose-leaves. This part of the house was more modern than the hall and kitchens, and two other rooms, in the very old days the 'parlours,' no doubt—now called the study and the office. For the house had been added to by a Mr. Wynne, the late owner's father, a grand-uncle to David and Clotilda Powys.

'Then the old part is very old indeed, I suppose?' said Neville to his aunt, who by this time had joined them.

'Very old indeed,' she said. 'And up-stairs it seems very rambling, for there are good rooms built over the pantry and dairy and the other offices, all of which are very large. I had it all planned in my head,' she went on, 'and even Mrs. Wynne herself used often to talk of what rooms would suit you all best when it came to be your father's. Up this little stair'—for by this time they were on the first floor again—'there are two rooms which would have made such nice nurseries for little Vida, and the "office," as we call it, could easily have been turned into a very pleasant schoolroom.'

The children were delighted with it all. Up-stairs, indeed, it was precisely the sort of house to captivate young people. It was so full of mysterious passages and unexpected stair-cases, and corner windows and queer doors, and steps up and steps down, that it seemed larger than it really was, and of course the usual praise was pronounced upon it, that it would be 'just the place for a game at hide-and-seek.'

Then when the house had been seen, Miss Clotilda sent them out, with directions not to wander too far, as they must be home for dinner at two o'clock.

'You cannot lose your way,' she said, 'if you take a good view all round. The sea is only a mile off on two sides—west and south—and this house therefore faces the sea, though the little hill in front hides it.'

'The sea!' exclaimed Kathie. 'Why, aunty, if I had known we were so near the sea, I should have been in such a hurry to see it, I wouldn't have slept all night. Did you know, Neville?'

'I didn't know it was *so* near,' said Neville.

'Go up the little hill, and then you will understand where you are,' said Miss Clotilda. 'There is the old church, too, and the ruins of the abbey beside it. You will find there is plenty to see at Hafod.'

'I don't care much for churches,' said Kathie, 'but I'd like to see the ruins.'

'Then set off at once; it is fine and sunny just now, but I

don't think the weather is very settled. Near the sea we have to expect sudden changes,' said Miss Clotilda.

The children eagerly followed her advice. They climbed up the hill, which they reached by a path through the garden,



and then they were well rewarded for their trouble. The view before them was a beautiful and uncommon one. At their feet, so to speak, lay the wide-stretching ocean, sparkling and gleaming in the sunshine, and further inland stood the

grand old church and ruins, with the white cottages of the scattered village dotted about in various directions.

‘How queer it is to see that great church in such a little place!’ said Kathleen. ‘It doesn’t seem to belong to it, and yet it looks grander than if it was in the middle of a town; doesn’t it, Neville?’

‘I suppose there was a great monastery, or something like that, here once,’ said Neville; ‘perhaps before there was any village at all. I think I have read something about it. We must ask Aunt Clotilda. Isn’t it a beautiful place, Kathleen? Oh, don’t you wish dreadfully it was going to be our home?’

Kathleen sighed. She had not before understood *how* much she should wish it.

‘Look there, Neville,’ she said, pointing to a white thread which wound over the hills, sometimes hidden for a little, then emerging again, that must be the road from Frewern Bay that we came along last night. Don’t we seem far away from London and from everywhere? Do you like the feeling? I think I rather do, except for poor old Phil.’

But Neville did not at once answer her. He was standing with his eyes fixed on the sea.

‘I don’t feel so far from papa and mamma here as in London,’ he said; ‘I like it for that.’

Kathleen’s gaze followed his.

‘Poor papa and mamma!’ she said. ‘Oh, Neville, *how* I wish we could find the will!’

They spent the rest of the morning, greatly to their own satisfaction, in visiting the ruins, and, as by a fortunate chance the door was open, the church also. It was so unlike anything they had ever seen, that even Kathie was full of admiration, and determined to learn all she could of its history.

‘We must ask Aunt Clotilda to tell us all about it,’ she said. ‘I daresay she has books where we can read about it, too. Papa and mamma would be pleased if we—oh dear! there it comes in about that will to spoil things again! I suppose it’s best not to write much about things here to them; it would only make it seem worse to them.’

‘Perhaps it would,’ said Neville; ‘but we can say lots about Aunt Clotilda, and that will please papa and mamma. Oh, Kathie, *don’t* you like her?’

Kathie grew rather red.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I do. I like her awfully. I *love* her, Neville, and—and—I’m very sorry I called her stupid, and all that.’

‘Dear Kathie,’ said Neville, ‘you didn’t know her.’

‘Well, no more did you,’ said Kathleen; ‘but you’re much better than me, Neville. So is Philippa.’

‘Dear Kathie,’ said Neville again, ‘it’s only that you’ve not had mamma with you, or anybody like that. I was older than you, you know, when they left us. And Philippa’s always had her mother. But now you have aunty.’

‘Yes,’ said Kathleen; but she sighed as she said it.

They turned to go home again, for they had not yet half explored the garden, which bid fair to be quite as delightful as the house. A little door in the wall was standing half open, and peeping in, they saw that it led by a footpath to the front door. There Miss Clotilda was standing talking to a funny-looking old man with a canvas bag slung over his back. Miss Clotilda seemed rather annoyed, and was speaking very earnestly.

‘You are sure, then, John Parry, quite sure, you have not dropped or left it at the wrong house, or anything like that?’

The old man only smiled amiably in a sort of superior way.

‘Sure, miss? To be sure I am. You’ll see miss, the letter has never been posted. Good-day to you, miss. Indeed, I am glad the young gentleman and lady’s got safe here;’ and he trotted off.

‘It’s about your letter, Neville,’ said his aunt. ‘I was certain it would turn up this morning. But it has not come, and it makes me uneasy. Just think, if one of your dear papa’s letters was to be lost. I have got fidgety about letters and papers, I suppose.’

‘It’s very queer,’ said Neville. ‘All our other letters have come quite rightly.’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘However, my dears, as I’ve got you safe here I must not grumble.’

She went back into the house to fetch her garden-hat, in



which, Kathie could not help whispering to Neville, she *did*

look a funny old dear. For the hat was about the size of a small clothes-basket, and Miss Clotilda despised all such invisible modes of fastening as elastic and hat-pins. She secured her head-dress with a good honest pair of black ribbon strings, firmly tied, for Ty-gwyn was a blowy place, as might have been expected from its nearness to the sea.

The three spent the rest of the morning most happily in the garden, visiting, too, the now disused dairy and the poultry-yard, where Miss Clotilda's cocks and hens, in blissful ignorance of the fate before them, were clucking and pecking about.

'I must fatten and kill them all off before the autumn,' she said; 'at least, nearly all. I could not have the heart to kill my special pets. I will give some to the neighbours.'

'Aunty,' said Kathleen, as they were returning to the house, 'there is something I wanted to ask you, and I can't remember what it is.'

Miss Clotilda's memory could not help her.

'Perhaps you will think of it afterwards,' she said.

And probably Kathie would have done so, had it not happened that her aunt had that morning, while the children were out, closed and locked the old cupboard in the little girl's room. So there was nothing to remind her of what she had been on the point of asking Miss Clotilda about Mrs. Wynne's old pincushions.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWS FROM PHILIPPA.



THE next two or three days passed most pleasantly. The weather, as if to make up for its bad behaviour on the day of their journey, was particularly fine, and the children were out from morning till night. Old Martha thought privately to herself that it was a good thing the neighbours were so kind, for they were even 'better than their word,' in sending all sorts of good things to Ty-gwyn for the Captain's children, as Neville and Kathleen's appetites, thanks to the change of air and the sea breezes, were really rather alarming. And Miss Clotilda was so perfectly happy to see them both so bright and well, that she tried to banish all painful thoughts as much as she could.

Still they were *there*; and when the poor lady was alone in her room at night, it was often more than she could do to restrain her tears. For the happier the children were, the more she learned to love them, the more bitterly, as was natural, did she feel the disappointment of not being able to

hope to see much more of them. But she said little or nothing of her feelings, and the children—Kathie especially—little suspected their depth. Kathie was living entirely in the present; she but rarely gave a thought to the ideas Philippa had suggested. And Neville, though less carelessly light-hearted and forgetful, was slower both of thought and speech. He could see nothing to be done, and for some time he rather shrank from coming upon the subject with his aunt.

It came to be spoken of at last, however, and this was how it happened.

One morning, about the fourth or fifth of their visit, old John Parry, with a great air of importance, as if he were doing her a special service, handed to Kathleen a rather fat letter, addressed to herself.

‘You see, miss, to be sure I never make no mistakes,’ he said.

For he was quite aware that Miss Clotilda still in her heart, somehow or other, associated him with the mysterious loss of Neville’s letter, and he wished to keep up his dignity in the eyes of the stranger young lady.

‘Oh yes, thank you,’ said Kathie, not quite knowing what else to say. For in London one’s personal acquaintance with the postman—or post*men*, rather—is necessarily of the slightest.

‘What a comical old fellow he is!’ she said to herself, as she ran off. ‘I daresay he did lose the letter, after all. How

amused Phil would be at the people here, and the funny way they talk! Dear old Phil! I wonder what she has got to say, and what she has written such a long letter about?' For the moment she got it in her hand she recognised little Philippa's careful, childish handwriting on the envelope.

'Aren't you coming out, Kathie?' Neville called out from some mysterious depths, where he was absorbed in arranging his fishing-tackle.

'Not yet. I've got a long letter from Philippa. You'll find me in the library if you look in in a few minutes.'

And in a comfortable corner of the deep window seat Kathie established herself to enjoy Philippa's budget. It was in the library that Miss Clotilda and the children spent most of their time. The drawing-room was a more formal and less cosy room, and the library gave old Martha less to do in the way of dusting and daily putting to rights. It was a dear old room, filled with books from floor to ceiling, many of them doubtless of little value, others probably of great worth in a connoisseur's eyes—had connoisseurs ever come to Ty-gwyn—for all were old, very old.

'How Philippa would like this room!' thought Kathie to herself. 'Phil is like Neville; she's far more sentimental and poetical, and all that sort of thing, than I am. I do hope she's enjoying her holidays.'

She opened the envelope as she spoke. Out tumbled another letter, closed, addressed, and stamped, but which had



evidently never been through the post. It was Neville's letter to Miss Clotilda!

'Oh!' Kathie ejaculated.

Then she turned to Philippa's own letter. It was dated, 'Cheltenham,' and she began, child fashion, by telling that she had got there safe, and she hoped Kathleen and her brother had got to Ty-gwyn safe, and that they were both quite well. Then she went on with rather doleful news. Her poor grandmother was ill; she had been taken ill the very night Philippa came, and

though she was a little better the doctor said she would not be well for a long time, and she was to go away somewhere for change of air. Philippa was not allowed to see her, and her uncle did not know what to do, but he had told Philippa he was afraid she would have to go back to school, and stay there for the rest of the holidays.

‘Uncle is kind, but he doesn’t know how awful it will be,’

wrote the poor little girl ;

‘and I don’t like to tell him, because he is so troubled about grandmamma. It is most because you won’t be there, dear Kathie. That Wednesday was as long as a week, when you had gone. I am afraid I am to go in three or four days. Uncle will take me. Do write quick to poor little Phil, *and don’t forget your promise.*’

Then came a postscript, Philippa having evidently been too absorbed by her own woes to think of anything else while she was writing the letter.

‘I found this letter in your old serge frock pocket—the one that was too shabby to take with you. I meant to send it to you before, but I wasn’t sure how to write the address ; you wrote it on such a scrap of paper. I will keep this till to-night, and ask uncle to help me. I hope it won’t matter, for as you are there your aunt won’t need letters from you. I was feeling in your pocket for my new bit of india-rubber that I lent you, but it wasn’t there.’

Kathie sat quite still for a minute or two after reading all this. Then she took up Neville’s letter and looked at it vaguely.

‘Yes,’ she said to herself, ‘I must have slipped it into my pocket, meaning to have it posted with my own note to

Neville. How careless of me! and to think how I went on about aunty not meeting us at the station.'

It was a good lesson for Kathie. The softening process had begun, and she was already ashamed to remember the way in which she had spoken of Miss Clotilda. And she was not a little mortified at now finding that she, and she alone, had been to blame. But Kathleen was courageous and honest. After a moment or two's hesitation, she got up and marched off, letters in hand, to the dining-room, where she knew she should find her aunt at that time of day.

'Aunty,' she said, and Miss Clotilda looked up from the fine old damask tablecloth she was carefully darning—she prided herself on her darning, and though the table-linen, as well as everything else, was Mr. Wynne-Carr's now, she would not on that account relax in her carefulness—'Aunty, I've got something to tell you. It wasn't old John Parry's fault about that letter, nor anybody's but mine. Look,' and she held it up, 'it's never been posted at all;' and she went on to explain to Miss Clotilda how it had been found. 'I am so sorry,' she said at the end.

Just then Neville came in. 'I have been looking everywhere for you, Kathie,' he said; and then the story had to be told to him again.

'I am sorry,' Kathie repeated, 'and ashamed,' she added, in a lower voice, and Neville saw that the tears were quivering on her eyelids. He understood.



‘LOOK, IT’S NEVER BEEN POSTED AT ALL!’

‘Poor dear child,’ said Miss Clotilda, ‘you shouldn’t take it to heart so. It’ll be a little lesson to you to be more careful about such things ; will it not, dear ?’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said Kathleen. She could not tell her kind aunt why she felt it so much—it would have been wrong to pain her by repeating the naughty, foolish things she had said of her—and this in itself made the impression still deeper.

‘And the little girl—your friend who has written to you—is she not the same one you were speaking of the other day ?’ asked Miss Clotilda, to change the subject.

‘Yes, aunty ; and oh, I am so sorry for her ! May I tell you what she says ?’ And Kathie read aloud Philippa’s letter.

‘Poor little girl !’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘What does she mean by asking you at the end not to forget your promise ?’

‘Oh,’ said Kathleen, ‘she’s a little silly about that. She—I told her about the will, aunty—you don’t mind ? I didn’t tell any one else’—

‘It matters very little,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘There is no secret about it. Everybody here knows the whole story. But what was your promise ?’

‘Phil had an idea that nobody had looked enough—for the will, or for the letter telling where it was to be found,’ said Kathleen. ‘She said she was sure *she* would think of new places to look in if she were here, and she made me promise to try. But—I am sure you have looked everywhere, aunty

—it would seem impertinent of Neville and me to try to look.'

'Not that, my dear,' said Miss Clotilda, 'but really and truly there is nowhere else to look. Do you know we have taken down and shaken every book in the library? A man, accustomed to such things, came on purpose. I have thought about the letter of directions too, but it is much less likely to be found than the will itself. It would be so small. If Mrs. Wynne had not given me the envelope containing the blank paper, so very shortly before her death, I should have begun to think that she had changed her mind and made no will at all. And yet—it was so unlike her. No, I feel sure the blank paper was put in by mistake.'

Miss Clotilda had left off her darning in the interest of the conversation. For a minute or two no one spoke. Then with a little effort Miss Clotilda seemed to recall her thoughts to the present.

'She must be a very nice child — that little Philippa,' she said, 'and very unselfish. It is not many children who would be able to think of anything but their own affairs in her place just now. I do feel for her, poor dear, having to go back to school, and all her companions away.'

She hesitated, as if on the point of saying more, but no words came. Then she took up her darning again.

'I wish'—Kathie began, and then she too stopped short. Neville glanced at her

‘I believe I know what you wish,’ he said. ‘And,’ he went on boldly, ‘I believe aunty is thinking of the very same thing.’

Again the poor tablecloth came off badly. Miss Clotilda let it fall, and in her turn she looked at both the children.

‘I daresay you do know what was in my mind, Neville,’ she said. ‘It would be almost unnatural not to think of it.’

‘You mean,’ said Kathie, half timidly, ‘if we could ask poor Phil to come here—if *you* could, I should say, aunty.’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Clotilda, ‘that was what I was thinking. I do feel so for the poor dear child. I know so well, so sadly well, what it is to be alone in that way. My mother, you know, dears, your grandmother, died when I was thirteen, and till her death I had never been separated from her. And then I was sent to school altogether, holidays and all, for three years, for your grandfather went abroad. I did not even see my little brother—dear little David—for all that time, for one of our aunts who had children of her own took care of him. It did not so much matter to him, for he was only a year old when our mother died, and so he was only four when we were together again. And it seems to him—I do like to feel that—that I was always with him. But for me those three years were—really—dreadful. Even now I can scarcely bear to think of them;’ and Miss Clotilda gave a little shiver.

‘Philippa cried awfully when she first came,’ said Kathleen.
‘She really did nothing but cry.

‘And you were good to her—I am sure you were, as she is so fond of you,’ said her aunt.

Kathie blushed a little.

‘Her mother asked me to be kind to her,’ she said, ‘and I tried to be because I promised. But I didn’t care much for her at first, aunty. I didn’t understand her caring so dreadfully, and you mustn’t think me horrid, for I do understand better now—it bothered me. But she got so fond of me—she fancied I was so much kinder than I really was, that—that I got very fond of her. And I think I’ve learnt some things from her—the same sort of things you make me feel, aunty.’

This was a wonderfully ‘sentimental’ speech to come from thoughtless Kathie. But both her hearers ‘understood.’

‘She must be a dear little girl,’ said Miss Clotilda again.
‘I should love to have her here, if’—

‘I know, aunty,’ Neville interrupted. ‘It is the expense. I know it is already a great deal for you to have *us*.’

‘No, dear,’ said Miss Clotilda, ‘it really is not so. People—my old neighbours and friends—are so kind. They are always sending presents just now. And one other little girl could not make much difference. It is more a sort of shrinking that I have from explaining things to strangers—a sort of false shame, perhaps. It *should* all have been so different.’

'Dear aunty,' said both the children, 'we wouldn't like you to do it if you feel that way.'

But Miss Clotilda was evidently not satisfied.

'She is a simple-minded child, is she not?' she asked in a little. 'Not the kind of child to be discontented with plain ways—our having only one servant, and so on, you know?'

'*Of course* not,' said Kathleen. 'She would think it all lovely. And, aunty,' she went on, 'it *is* lovely. You don't know how it all looks to us after school. Everything is so cold and stiff, and—and—not pretty there. And the things to eat here are so delicious; aren't they, Neville? The fruit and the milk and the bread and butter. Oh, aunty!'

'What, my dear?'

'*Don't* you think you could? What room would Phil have?'

'I was thinking of the one next yours. It is small, but we could make it look nice. There is no dearth of anything in the way of linen and such things in the house. Mrs. Wynne had such beautiful napery—that is the old word for it, you know—and she took such a pride in it. I must show you the linen-room some day, Kathie. I have taken great pleasure in keeping it in perfect order for your mother.'

Again the sad feeling of disappointment.

'Kathie,' said, Neville, a minute or two later when their

aunt had left the room, 'I want you to come out with me. You're not going to write to Philippa to-day, are you ?

'No,' said Kathleen, 'not to-day. But I should like to send the letter to-morrow, for fear of her leaving her grandmother's. I will write to her this afternoon or this evening. I've lots to tell her—all about the journey, and the funny old farmer, and the carrier's cart.'

'Yes,' said Neville. 'If she comes here, Kathie, we'll manage better than that. I wonder if aunty would let us go to Hafod to meet her. Any way, I might go. Perhaps you'd rather stay to welcome her here—to put flowers in her room, and that sort of thing. Girls do so like all that.'

'So do boys too—at least, some boys. You *always* bring me a nosegay on my birthday. I am sure you like flowers as much as any girl could,' said Kathie.

'I didn't mean flowers only. I meant—oh, fussing,' said Neville vaguely.

But Kathleen was too much taken up by the idea of Philippa's coming to be in a touchy humour.

'Do you really think, Neville,' she said,—'do you really and truly think aunty is going to ask her?'

'I don't know. I'm sure she'd like to—if she can. She's so awfully good and kind.'

'Yes,' Kathleen heartily agreed. 'I never even thought before that anybody *could* be so kind.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE COTTAGE NEAR THE CREEK.



KATHLEEN was just finishing a long letter to Philippa that afternoon in the library, when Miss Clotilda came into the room with her usual quiet step. Kathleen did not hear her till her aunt laid her hand on her shoulder. The little girl started.

‘Oh, aunty,’ she said, ‘I’ve been writing to poor Phil. Such a long letter!’

‘And long as it is, I’m afraid you will have to make it still a little longer,’ said Miss Clotilda.

Something in the tone of her voice made Kathleen look up. Miss Clotilda was smiling, and her pale cheeks were a little pinker than usual.

‘Listen to me, dear,’ she said. ‘I have thought it over, and it seems to me really right, only right and kind, to ask that poor child to come to us here. I have written to her uncle to propose it, and I have explained things just a little, saying that I am only here for a short time more, and that

things are not as they used to be, but that we shall make her most welcome. I thought it best to write to the uncle, as her grandmother is so ill. You can give me the exact address, I suppose, and the uncle's name?'

Kathie held up Philippa's letter.

'Yes, aunty,' she said. 'You see, it is written at the top.



She told me to put "care of" to her uncle, because her name is not the same as his and her grandmother's. He is her mother's brother. But oh, dear aunty, I can scarcely believe you are really going to let her come! It is *too* delicious.'

'It does not rest only with me, however, dear, you must remember,' Miss Clotilda said. 'You must not count upon

it too surely till we hear from her friends. They may not approve of it, or there may be difficulties in the way of bringing her. It is rather a long way from Cheltenham, and an expensive journey.'

'I don't think that would matter,' said Kathleen. 'I'm almost sure Phil's relations are rich, and she is an only child.'

'Well, let us hope they will let her come,' said Miss Clotilda. 'I will send my letter separately; but I wanted to ask you what you thought of telling the little girl herself about it. Do you think it best to say nothing to her till we hear from her uncle, and to leave it to him to tell her?'

Kathie considered.

'No, aunty,' she said. 'I think we needn't do that. Philippa is such a *very* sensible little girl, I'm sure her uncle would talk to her about it immediately. So may I write and tell her? Oh dear, how lovely!'

'Yes, certainly. You haven't very much time. The letters must go in half an hour, but as you are hoping now to see her soon, you won't need to say so very much.'

Kathie's pen flew along the paper. She could have filled pages with the anticipated delights of Philippa's visit, and it was just as well her time was limited. One argument she brought to bear with great force in favour of the visit. 'Be sure to tell your uncle,' she wrote, 'that your mamma gave you into my charge at school, and that I promised her

to try to make you happy. So I am sure, if there was time to ask her, that *she* would like you to come.'

'I think that's very clever of me,' she said to herself, as she folded up the letter, 'and I'm sure it's quite true. But how shall I get through the next two or three days till we can hear if she is coming? I must get Neville to take me tremendously long walks.'

The next day, fortunately, was very fine.

'Aunty,' said Kathleen at breakfast, 'I do feel in such a fidget about Philippa coming that I'm afraid I shall get quite unbearable. Don't you think the best thing would be for Neville and me to go a very long walk to calm me down?'

'Do very long walks generally have that desirable effect?' asked Miss Clotilda. 'I have no objection, provided you don't lose your way.'

'Oh! we won't lose our way,' said Neville. 'I have a pocket compass. Besides, as you said yourself, aunty, it is a very easy country to find one's way in. There's always a hill one can climb, and once you see the sea, you can easily make out where you are.'

'And any of the cottagers about can direct you to Ty-gwyn,' said Miss Clotilda. 'Well, then, if you ask Martha to make you some sandwiches, and to give you some rock cakes for "pudding," you might take your dinners with you, and not come back till the afternoon. And,' she added, glancing out of the window as she spoke, 'I think

you would do well to make hay while the sun shines, at present—that is to say, to go a long walk while it is fine, for I don't think this weather is going to last above a day or two.'

'Oh!' Kathie exclaimed, 'I do hope it won't rain all the time Philippa is here.'

'Kathie,' said Neville, 'you are too silly. Auntie only meant that we might have *some* rain. She never said it would rain for weeks.'

'That it seldom, indeed never, does here,' said Miss Clotilda. 'But, you know, in a very hilly district you must expect uncertain weather. I think there is no fear for to-day, however.'

And an hour or two later the children set off.

'Which way shall we go?' said Kathleen. 'To the sea?'

Neville looked round.

'Suppose we go over there, towards that hill,' he said. 'There's a sort of creek between two little hills there—or more perhaps as if it was cut in the middle of one—that must be very pretty. Martha told me about it. I forget the name she called it in Welsh. She said the smugglers used to run their boats in there, for there are caves they could hide things in.'

'Oh, what fun!' said Kathie. 'Do let us go! Are there no smugglers now, Neville? What a pity!' she went on, as her brother shook his head. 'It would be so romantic to find a smugglers' cave.'



‘WHERE ARE THE CAVES, NEVILLE?’

‘I don’t think it would be romantic at all—at least, it wouldn’t be at all pleasant,’ said sensible Neville. ‘In the days when there were smugglers, if they had found us poking about their caves they wouldn’t have been very amiable to us.’

‘What would they have done to us?’ asked Kathleen.

‘Pitched us into the sea, or—or gagged us, and tied our hands behind us, and left us among the rocks on the chance of any one finding us,’ said Neville grimly.

Kathleen shuddered. They were soon at the entrance to the little creek which Martha had described, coming upon it suddenly, as a turn in the path brought them sharply down to a lower level. It was very picturesque. Against the strip of blue sky seen through the fissure or cleft which formed the creek, stood out clearly the outline of a small fishing craft, drawn up on the shingly beach; while down below, the water, darkened by the shade of the rocks on each side, gleamed black and mysterious.

‘What a queer place!’ said Kathleen. ‘Where are the caves, Neville? I don’t see any.’

‘I suppose they are facing the sea. We must make our way round over the stones at the edge of the water if we want to see them. It isn’t deep, though it looks so dark. You needn’t be afraid,’ said Neville, beginning the scramble.

But Kathleen hung back.

‘Neville,’ she said, ‘you’re quite sure there aren’t any smugglers now?’

‘Of course not,’ said Neville, rather disdainfully. ‘Kathie, you shouldn’t be so boasting about never being frightened, and all that, if you are really so babyish.’

‘I’m not babyish. Neville, you’re very unkind. You never were so unkind in London,’ said Kathie, looking ready to cry.

‘I don’t mean to be unkind,’ said Neville, stopping short in his progress, one foot on a big stone, the other still on the grass near the edge of the water. ‘But if you’re the least afraid, Kathie, either of smugglers or of the scramble—it will be a scramble, I see—you’d better not come. Supposing you go up to that little cottage—there’s quite a nice old woman living there—while I go on to the caves? I’ll come back for you in ten minutes or so.’

‘Very well,’ said Kathie; ‘I think I’d better, perhaps. It isn’t for the smugglers, Neville. I wouldn’t let *you* go if there was any chance of there being any. But I’m rather afraid of tumbling. Are you sure it’s safe for you, Neville?’

‘Oh, yes. Aunty told me I might go any day. She explained all about it to me.’

‘Well, then, don’t be long;’ and so saying, Kathleen began making her way up the slope to the little cottage Neville had pointed out.

It was a very tiny place. There was no garden, but a little patch of grass had been roughly railed in, and on this two or three chickens were pecking about. A very old

woman came to the door on seeing Kathleen approaching, with a smile on her brown, wrinkled, old face.

‘Good morning, miss,’ she said in very good English. ‘Would you like to rest a bit?’

‘Thank you,’ said Kathie; ‘I’d like to wait a few minutes, if you don’t mind, till my brother comes to fetch me. He’s gone down to see the caves.’

‘To be sure,’ said the old woman. ‘Perhaps you’d like best to wait outside; it’s pleasant in the air this morning;’ and she quickly brought out a chair, and set it for Kathie against the wall of the cottage. ‘And you’ll be the young lady and gentleman from Ty-gywn? Dear, dear!’

‘What do you say that for?’ asked Kathie, not quite sure if she was pleased or vexed at the state of the family affairs being evidently understood by this old woman.

‘No offence, miss,’ said the dame. ‘I’m not of this country, miss, though I’ve lived here nigh thirty years, and I’ve seen a deal in my time. I was kitchen-maid when I was a girl in London town.’

‘Indeed,’ said Kathleen; ‘that must have been a *very* long time ago;’ which was perhaps not a very polite speech.

‘And so it is—a very long time ago. A matter of fifty years, miss.’

‘Indeed,’ said Kathleen, opening her eyes; ‘that is a very long time.’

‘And yet I can remember things as happened then as

if they'd been yesterday,' said the old woman. 'There was a queer thing happened in the house of my missis's father. He was a very old man, not to say quite right in his head, and when he died there was papers missing that had to do



with the money some way. And would you believe, miss, where they was found? In his pillow, hid right away among the feathers! There's many folk as 'll hide money and papers in a mattress, but I never heard tell before or since of hiding in a pillow; and it's been in my mind ever

since Farmer Davis told me of the trouble at Ty-gwyn to ask the lady if she'd ever thought of looking in the pillows.'

'Who is Farmer Davis?' asked Kathleen, for the name seemed familiar.

'Him who lives at Dol-bach,' said the old woman. 'He travelled in the railway with you and the young gentleman. You should go to see him some day, miss. He'd be proud; and the old lady thought a deal of him and his wife.'

'Yes,' said Kathleen, 'I'd like to go to see him. He was very kind to us. There's my brother coming,' she went on, as she caught sight of Neville coming up the hill. 'Thank you very much for letting me wait here,' and she got up to go.

'And you won't forget about the pillows, miss?' said the old body.

'No, I won't,' Kathleen replied.

'She's such a funny old woman, Neville,' she said, when they met. And then she went on to repeat what the dame had told her about the pillows.

'Oh,' said Neville, 'they are all gossiping about it. It is nonsense—Mrs. Wynne wasn't out of her mind'.

'Then do you think it's no use looking anywhere?' said Kathleen.

'Certainly not in the pillows,' said Neville, laughing. 'I think we'd better have our dinner now, Kathie, don't

you? Over there, just between this hill and the next, I should think there would be a nice place.'

And having found a snug corner, they established themselves comfortably.

'Were the caves nice?' asked Kathleen.

'Not very—at least, I didn't like to go very far alone. There was one that looked as if it would be very nice—a great, deep, black place, but one would need a light. I'll try to go again some day, if I can get anyone to go with me. It's not fit for girls.'

Suddenly Kathleen gave a deep sigh.

'What's the matter?' asked Neville.

'It's only what that old woman said. It's put it all into my head again,' said Kathleen. 'I should have liked to tell Phil we had searched *somewhere*.'

'Wait till she comes,' said Neville. 'She'll soon see for herself that there's *nowhere* to search. I've thought and thought about it, and I'm sure aunty has done everything anybody could.'

So no more was said about it, and they finished their dinner comfortably. Then they set off again, and climbed the hill from whence they had been told the view was so beautiful. Nor were they disappointed—the day was unusually clear, with the clearness that tells of rain at no great distance, and on all sides they could see over many miles.

‘How lovely the sea is!’ said Kathleen. ‘The only fault I can find with Ty-gwyn is that you can’t see the sea from the house. Now that house over there, Neville—over towards the sea, but a good way from it—on the side of a hill,’ and she pointed towards it, ‘must have a lovely view of the sea. I wonder what house it is? It looks so pretty.’

‘I know,’ said Neville. ‘It is the old farmer’s. It is Dol-bach.’

‘Old Farmer Davis’s?’ said Kathleen. ‘Oh, that reminds me the old woman at the cottage said we should go to see him, and thank him for being so kind the day we came. Indeed, we should have gone already.’

‘Did she say so?’ said Neville; ‘she must be rather an impertinent old woman. It’s no business of hers.’

‘Oh no, she isn’t impertinent at all,’ said Kathleen. ‘*She* didn’t say we should have gone already. That was only my own thought. She said he’d be “proud” to see us—I think that sounds very nice, Neville—and that Mrs. Wynne thought “a deal” of him and his wife. Supposing we go now, Neville, on our way home?’

‘No,’ said Neville. ‘I don’t think it would be right to go anywhere without asking Aunt Clotilda. But I daresay she’ll let us go. I remember old Davis said something about knowing Mrs. Wynne very well.’

‘We’ll ask her,’ said Kathie. ‘It would be something

nice to do, to keep my mind off Phil's coming. And we might dress nicely, Neville. It would be more of a compliment to them, you know, if we went nicely dressed—like paying a real call.'

They met Miss Clotilda coming to meet them, when, after a good long ramble among the hills, they made their way home.

'I have come along the road two or three times to look for you,' she said. 'Have you had a nice walk, and any adventures?'

'Oh, yes,' said Kathie, and she launched at once into an account of her old woman.

But Neville noticed that she did not mention the anecdote about the pillow. 'Perhaps it is better not to keep reminding aunty of it,' he thought. 'I am glad Kathie is so thoughtful.'

'And may we go to see Farmer Davis, aunty?' asked Kathie eagerly.

'Oh, certainly,' said Miss Clotilda. 'I was thinking of proposing it. It would have been no use going to-day, as both he and his wife were at Haford Market, I know. There are many of our neighbours I should have liked to take you to see, both the gentlepeople and others; but it is impossible to go about much without a horse of any kind,' she ended, with a little sigh.

'May we go to Dol-bach to-morrow?' asked Kathie. 'I want to keep myself from fidgeting.'

Miss Clotilda could not help smiling at her.



‘I have no objection,’ she said, ‘if the weather holds up ; which, however, I have my doubts of.’

And her doubts proved well founded. ‘To-morrow’ proved a very rainy day—a thoroughly and hopelessly rainy day, such as seldom is to be seen in the middle of summer, and Kathleen’s spirits sank to zero. She was sure they were not going to have any more fine weather ; sure a letter would come from Philippa’s uncle refusing the invitation ; and very angry with Neville for remarking that if the first prediction was fulfilled, it was almost to be hoped the second would come to pass

also. And when the morning after broke again dull and gloomy, Miss Clotilda felt really distressed at Kathie’s gloom.

‘My dear,’ she said, ‘you must make an effort to be cheerful and patient. You cannot, at soonest, have an answer from Philippa till to-morrow, and you cannot go to Dol-bach to-day; even if the rain leaves off, the roads will be terribly bad. Try to think of something to do in the house that will occupy and interest you. I am almost sure that to-morrow will be fine.’

Kathleen listened respectfully enough, but with a most depressed look in her face, to the beginning of this speech. Half-way through it, however, her face suddenly cleared, and a light came into her eyes.

‘Thank you, aunty,’ she said. ‘Yes, I have something I should like to do up in my own room. I won’t grumble any more,’ and off she set.

‘She is a dear child,’ thought her aunt. ‘A word suffices with her.’

Poor Miss Clotilda! She scarcely knew her volatile, flighty little niece as yet.

CHAPTER X.

A PLAGUE OF FEATHERS.



AN hour or two later, Miss Clotilda, having completed her housekeeping arrangements for the day, went up to Kathie's room to see what she was about. Neville had gone off for a walk, as the rain was now slight, and of course, as he said himself, 'for a boy it was different.'

'Poor, dear child!' said Miss Clotilda, as she reached Kathleen's door; 'I hope she isn't feeling dull, all alone.'

The door was locked.

'Kathie,' she called, 'it is I—aunty.'

A scattering inside, and then Kathleen's voice, sounding rather odd, replied, 'In a moment, aunty. Oh dear, oh dear! I wish I'—

'What is the matter, Kathie? Open at once, my dear; you alarm me!' Miss Clotilda exclaimed.

Thus adjured, Kathleen had no choice. She drew the bolt; Miss Clotilda entered.

What *was* the matter? For an instant or two she was too



WHAT WAS THE MATTER?

bewildered to tell. The room seemed filled with fluff; a sort of dust was in the air; Kathie's own dress and hair looked as if they had been snowed upon; every piece of furniture in the room was covered with what on closer inspection proved to be feathers! And Kathleen herself, the image of despair, stood in helpless distress.

'Oh, aunty,' she said, reminding one of the merchant in 'The Arabian Nights,' when he had let the genii out of the bottle, 'I *can't* get them in again.' Poor Kathie—her genii were to be reckoned by thousands!

'What is it? What *have* you been doing? Feathers!' exclaimed Miss Clotilda, stooping to examine a whitey-grey heap on the floor, which, disturbed even by her gentle movements, forthwith flew up in clouds, choking and blinding her. '*Feathers*—my dear child!'

'Oh, aunty,' said Kathleen, bursting into tears, 'I never knew they were such horrid things. It's my pillow, and one off Neville's bed, and two off yours, and one off the big green-room bed, and—I got them all in here;' and then amidst her sobs she went on to tell her aunt of the old woman's story and the search it had suggsted. 'I didn't mean to empty the pillows, but they kept coming out so when I put my arm in to feel, and I thought at last it would be easier to shake them all out and fill the covers again, so that I couldn't have missed even a small piece of paper. But it's no good; and oh, I've made such a mess!'

There was no denying this last fact. Miss Clotilda hurried Kathie out of the room—for, as everybody knows, the fluff of feathers is really injurious to the throat and lungs—and hurried Martha up to see what could be done. It ended in a woman having to be sent for from the village to re-imprison the flighty feathers in their cases; but even after this was done, Kathleen could not sleep in her room that night.

‘I am so sorry, aunty,’ she said, so humbly that kind Miss Clotilda could not but forgive her, though she made her promise for the future to attempt no more ‘searches’ without consulting her elders.

‘Of course I’ll promise that and more than that,’ said Kathie, as she dried her eyes; ‘I won’t search *at all* for that nasty will. I didn’t want to, only I thought Philippa would say I should have tried to find it. But I’ll just show her it’s no use.’

And Neville was so sorry to see her distress that he did not even remind her of *his* having told her that searching the pillows would be no use; which, in my opinion, was truly generous of him.

All troubles were, however, cast into the shade when the next morning brought a letter from Mr. Wentworth, Philippa’s uncle, most heartily thanking Miss Clotilda for her kindness, and eagerly accepting her invitation. Mr. Wentworth wrote that he had been quite distressed at the idea of sending the

poor child back to school, but till Miss Clotilda's proposal came he had seen no help for it. He went on to say that he would bring Philippa himself to Hafod if Miss Clotilda could send to meet her there, but that he could only make the journey *at once*. If 'Thursday' were too soon for Philippa to come, would Miss Powys telegraph to say so—in that case he feared the visit would have to be put off till he could hear of an escort.

'Thursday!' Miss Clotilda exclaimed, 'that is to-morrow. Telegraph! It is plain Mr. Wentworth does not know much of this part of the country. There is no telegraph office nearer than Boyneth, and that is half-way to Hafod.'

'But, aunty,' said Kathleen, looking up from the little scrap to herself which Philippa had slipped into her uncle's letter, 'need you think of telegraphing? Mayn't she come to-morrow? She is *so* happy—oh, aunty, do read her dear little letter.'

Aunty did not need much persuasion.

'If we can get things ready, and if Mr. Mortimer can lend us his waggonette,' she said hesitatingly. 'There is your room still upset, you know, Kathie,' at which Kathleen grew very red; 'and I don't know'—

'Can't I go to Mr. Mortimer's and ask him?' said Neville. 'It isn't very far, and I can find the way, I'm sure.'

'That might do, said his aunt; 'and if the waggonette is not to be had, perhaps he would lend us the pony-carriage. That would do for two, besides the one driving.'

So it turned out. The waggonette was required to meet friends of the Mortimers themselves, arriving to-morrow, but Miss Clotilda was welcome to the pony-cart, and the strong pony which drew it would be quite able for the two journeys, with a good rest between. And the little girl's luggage might come up with that of the Mortimers' friends, and be left at Ty-gwyn on the way.

There was only one drawback; Kathleen could not go to the station. Miss Clotilda would drive, and Neville must go with her to open gates, etc., in case of need. And Kathleen must content herself for staying at home by adorning Philippa's room with flowers, as Neville had suggested.

'Only, whatever you do, please leave the pillows alone my dear,' said Miss Clotilda, as they drove off the next morning.

Kathie was quite cured of searching for the lost will, though not sorry to be able to assure her eager little friend that she really *had* done so. The day passed quickly enough, however; for, to make up for the trouble she had given the day before, she set herself to be particularly useful to Martha. And by seven o'clock, the time at which the pony-carriage might be *begun* to be looked for—for Philippa was to come by a much earlier train than the London express—Kathleen, having helped to set the tea-table and bake the cakes, and having given the last touch to Philippa's little room, was hopping about in front of the house, looking very neat and

nice in a clean white frock, her face and eyes, indeed her whole little person, in a perfect glow of happy expectation.



Nor was her patience long put to the test. It was not more than twenty minutes past seven when approaching wheels were to be heard. Kathie scuttered back into the house; she wanted to be standing just within the door, not outside, when they arrived; and in another half minute there they were. Neville had jumped down and was helping out a little familiar figure, while Miss Clotilda smiled brightly at the sight of the children's delight.

‘My dear old Phil!’ ‘My darling Kathie!’ and for a moment or two hugs and kisses had it all to themselves.

Then Miss Clotilda got out, and Neville got in again to drive the pony home, with many charges to be quick.

‘Tea is quite ready,’ Kathie called after him; ‘and I’m so hungry that I can fancy what you must all be.’

‘Take Philippa up to her room, Kathie,’ said her aunt. ‘Her luggage won’t be here for an hour or two, but you can lend her a pair of slippers, I daresay.’

‘Oh, mine would be far too big, aunty; but you may be sure Phil has got a pair in her bag,’ said Kathie, laughing. ‘She’s a regular old maid, you know;’ and she held up the bag in question for her aunt to see. ‘Your room will just suit you, Phil,’ she ran on; ‘it’s as tiny as yourself and as neat as a pin.’

And Philippa’s exclamations of delight when they entered it, well rewarded Kathleen for all the trouble she had taken.

‘Oh, Kathie,’ said the little girl, ‘what a *perfect* place Ty-gwyn is! and how kind and sweet your aunt is, and how good of you all to have me; and oh, Kathie, have you hunted well for the will?’

‘Don’t speak of it—horrid thing!’ said Kathleen with a grimace. ‘Yes, I have hunted for it—all to please you, Phil. I’ll just tell you what I did,’ and she proceeded to relate the unfortunate experience with the pillows.

Philippa was deeply interested.

‘I don’t think it’s likely she hid it in a pillow,’ she remarked. ‘But I have such a feeling that it is somewhere in

the house. I am sorry you don't mean to look any more, Kathie.'

'Oh well, don't talk about it any more just now,' said Kathleen. 'We want to be as happy as ever we can be. If only the weather is fine, and it does look better to-day,—oh, you don't know how it rained yesterday, and the day before worse still,—we can go such lovely walks. You know we're quite near the sea here—up there from that hill we can see it,' and she pointed out of the window.

'Can we really?' said Philippa. 'How nice! I do think it is the loveliest place I ever saw, Kathie. How I do wish it was going to be your home for always!'

'Ah well! there's no use thinking of that,' said Kathleen, 'though of course we can't help wishing it. It's worst for aunty—isn't she sweet, Phil? Come now, are you ready? We'll just take a peep into my room on the way down—isn't it a jolly room, the very next door to yours, do you see? And afterwards I'll show you all the house—there are such lots of rooms, and all so nice and queer. Don't you smell that nice old-fashioned sort of scent, Phil? Like lavender and dried rose-leaves; and it's partly the scent of the wood of the wainscoting, aunty says.'

'Yes,' said Philippa, sniffing about with her funny little nose; 'it's very nice, and everything is so *beautifully* clean, Kathie. Grandmamma's house is very nice, but it hasn't the same sort of look and feeling this dear old house has.'

‘I am so glad you like it, dear,’ said Kathie, very amiably. ‘But we must run down. I am sure you must be *very* hungry.’

‘I think I’m too happy to be very, very hungry,’ said Philippa.

She managed, however, to do justice to the good things Martha had prepared, and Miss Clotilda told her she would be very disappointed indeed if three weeks at Ty-gwyn did not make her both fatter and rosier.

‘But she’s looking much better than she did at school, aunty,’ said Kathleen. ‘Last spring she was a miserable little object.’

‘But that was because I was so very unhappy about mamma going away,’ said Philippa, getting rather red.

‘Poor, dear child!’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘Ah, well! I can sympathise in that. But you will be able to send your mother a very cheerful letter from here, I hope.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said the little girl. ‘And I’m so glad now that we didn’t write last week to tell her of grandmamma being ill, and my having to go back to school. Uncle and I talked it over, and we thought we might wait till this week, and now she’ll hear of grandmamma’s being better and me coming here, at the same time, so it won’t make her unhappy.’

‘Your uncle seems very kind indeed,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘I was quite sorry for him to have to make such a long journey, and to go straight back again.’

‘Yes,’ said Philippa. ‘But, you see,’ she went on, in her funny little prim way, ‘he wouldn’t have felt happy to have left grandmamma longer alone. He will be home by eleven to-night.’

This first evening was not a very long one, for after tea Philippa’s box arrived, and Kathleen had, of course, to go upstairs with her little friend to help her to unpack her things and put them away. And Miss Clotilda told the children that they must go to bed early, as Philippa would be tired.

‘Have you been very tidy, Kathie, without me?’ asked Philippa. ‘I’m sure you must often have wanted me to put your belongings neat, and to find your pencils and gloves, and all the things you lose.’

‘No; I’ve got on very well indeed, thank you, Miss Conceit,’ said Kathie, laughing. ‘It’s much easier here than at school. There’s so much more room, and one isn’t so hurried.’

‘Still, it would show a good deal if you were very untidy,’ said Philippa. ‘The house does look so neat all over. Have you done any work, Kathie? I am in such a fuss about what I can make to send to mamma for her birthday. I’ve always made her something every year as long as I can remember, and I wouldn’t like to miss this year, the first I’ve been away from her.’

‘We’ll have to think of something. Aunt Clotilda is very clever at work,’ said Kathie. ‘You should see her darning.’

‘Grandmamma was going to have helped me to get

something pretty to work for mamma, only then she got ill,' said Philippa. 'Uncle is going to send out a box soon, so it needn't be a very little thing, not like for going by post. I shall be so glad if your aunt can think of anything.'

'I'm sure she will,' said Kathleen.

But just then Martha tapped at the door with some hot water for 'the young lady,' which was a broad hint that it was time for Philippa to go to bed.

'Good-night, dear,' said Kathleen. 'I think it's going to be fine to-morrow—the sky looks nice and reddy—and we shall be out nearly all day. You like going long walks, don't you, dear?'

'Yes, of course I do; at least, if it isn't *too* far. But we could always have nice rests, couldn't we? It isn't like going out walks in town, where one has to go on and on, however tired one is.'

'No, indeed. There are lovely places to rest. And, by-the-by, that reminds me—but I won't keep you up, Phil. I'll tell you to-morrow.'

For suddenly there had flashed into Kathie's flighty head the remembrance of the visit she had been eager to pay to the old farmer at Dol-bach. It would be such a nice expedition for Philippa's first day.

'I'll ask aunty early to-morrow morning if we mayn't go,' she thought, as she fell asleep.

But to-morrow morning brought fifty other ideas to

volatile Kathie. There were so many things to show Philippa; the house, and the garden, and the poultry, and the dairy absorbed the morning, and in the afternoon Miss Clotilda went out with them herself to show the little guest some of the prettiest views, ending up by a visit to the beach.

‘Isn’t *this* sea different to the beach at Bognor, Philippa?’ said Kathleen. ‘All crowded with people, and Miss Fraser scolding, and no hills or trees. Oh, I forgot! you hadn’t been long enough at school to have been at Bognor. That’s a pleasure to come for next year. Oh dear! how I wish’—

But she stopped herself, and said no more. Everybody knew *what* she wished, but they all knew too that there was no use in speaking about it.

‘Kathie,’ said Neville, partly to change the conversation, ‘what’s become of our visit to Dol-bach? You were in such a fuss about it two or three days ago.’

‘Oh,’ said Kathie, ‘I forgot. Aunty,’ she went on, ‘may we go there to-morrow? If it’s as fine as it is to-day, mightn’t we take our dinner with us, like the other day? And then we could go to Dol-bach on our way home in the afternoon, and very likely they’d give us some milk, and perhaps some cake.’

Aunty had no objection, and so it was settled.

By the next day Philippa had quite got over her tiredness, though Miss Clotilda warned Neville and Kathleen that they must remember she was not quite as strong as they. And the three children set off on their expedition in high spirits.

‘You don’t want to see your old woman in the cottage near the creek, do you, Kathie? Don’t you think, perhaps, you should tell her about the results of searching the pillows?’ said Neville mischievously.

Kathleen looked at him indignantly.

‘I think you are very unkind,’ she said, ‘and very mean. You know I don’t want to quarrel just as Philippa’s come, and you’re just taking advantage of it.’

‘Come now, Kathie,’ said Neville good-humouredly. ‘I don’t think really you need be so touchy.’

‘I only did it to please *you*, Phil,’ Kathie went on.

Philippa opened her eyes at this.

‘To please me?’ she repeated.

‘Well, you know you said you were sure you’d find *it* if you were in the house, and I didn’t want you to think I hadn’t looked at all.’

‘I didn’t say I was sure I’d find it,’ said Philippa. ‘If I thought that, I’d ask Miss Clotilda’s leave to look now I am in the house. But I *have* a very queer feeling that it *is* in the house; and last night—now don’t laugh at me, Kathie—I had such a queer dream.’

‘Do tell it to us,’ said both Neville and Kathleen.

But Philippa was a little out of breath with climbing.

‘Let’s wait till we sit down to eat our dinner, and then I’ll tell it you,’ she said.

So they agreed to wait till then.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PINCUSHION MANUFACTORY.



AFTER a while the three children had had enough of climbing and scrambling about, besides which they began to feel hungry. They found a nook which, as Philippa said, 'seemed made on purpose to eat their dinner in,' and there they comfortably established themselves for that purpose.

Dinner over, Kathleen reminded Philippa of her dream.

'Oh yes,' said the little girl, 'it really was a very funny one. I thought I was at school, and Miss Fraser was calling to Kathie and me to be quick, and just as we ran out of the room—which had turned into Kathie's room at Ty-gywn, only that there were seats all round like a railway-carriage, and the door was like a railway-carriage door—Kathie's frock tore, and she called to me for a pin. I put my hand into my pocket to feel for my little pincushion, which I always keep there, and my pocket was all full of some sort of stuff like—like'—

'Like feathers,' said Kathie; 'it was my telling you about the pillows.'



THEY FOUND A NOOK . . . TO EAT THEIR DINNER IN.

‘No,’ Philippa went on, ‘it wasn’t like feathers—it was more powdery.’

‘Like dried rose-leaves?’ again suggested Kathie. ‘What aunty calls “pot-pourri.” We were talking of the scent of it last night.’

‘Oh, Kathie, do be quiet!’ said Neville. ‘You can’t always explain dreams like that—indeed, you very seldom can.’

‘Bits of them you very often can,’ Kathleen maintained.

‘But it wasn’t dried rose-leaves either,’ said Philippa. ‘I remember the feeling of it in my fingers. If I remember afterwards what it was like, I’ll tell you. Well, I pulled my hand out again, and I found I was holding something—not my pincushion. The thing was a little book, only it wasn’t made of paper, but of lovely bits of silk, all fastened together, for the leaves. And the funniest thing was that though they were of all sorts of patterns and colours, there seemed to be words on them all, which you could read through the patterns somehow. I fancied that the words on the first page were, “For dear mamma, from her loving Philippa;” and immediately I called out, “Oh, Kathie, see! it’s a present for me to send to mamma, only I haven’t made it myself.” Still I went on turning the leaves. I can’t remember any of the words on them till I came to the last, and on it I read, “Look in the — ,” and then it seemed all a muddle, only I knew it meant the place where the will

was. I tried and tried to read it, but I couldn't; and then I called to Kathie to try, and I suppose I must have really made a little squeak in my sleep, for just as I thought I was calling her very loud, I woke.'

'And all the time I was waiting for the pin,' said Kathleen. 'Well, yes, it was a very queer dream, though I could explain a good deal of it. You see, you'—

But Neville put his fingers in his ears.

'We don't want it explained,' he said. 'It's much more interesting to fancy what it could mean—like—like the dreams in the Bible, you know.'

'You're very irreverent, Neville,' said Kathie.

'I'm not,' said Neville. 'Dreams do come sometimes that mean things.'

'But I *can't* think what the stuff in my pocket could be,' said Philippa; and neither of the others could help her to an idea.

'I think,' said Neville, 'we'd better be going on to old Davis's. It's about twenty minutes' walk from here.'

'Very well,' said the little girls; and they set off, Philippa declaring that she was now 'quite, quite rested.'

They were heartily welcomed at Dol-bach. Mr. Davis introduced his wife, who was as pleasant-looking for an old woman as he for an old man. He had been 'hoping they'd look in some of these days,' he said; and Mrs. Davis had evidently heard all about them, though she, and Mr. Davis

too for that matter, looked puzzled as to where Philippa had come from. They were very much interested to hear all about her, and congratulated her on having had a pleasanter ending to her journey than had fallen to the share of her friends.

‘It didn’t seem so far a way from Hafod to Ty-gwyn yesterday as in the carrier’s cart, did it, sir?’ said Davis to Neville. ‘But the road’s a deal better than in my young days; and Mrs. Wynne, she’s many a time told us how her mother—the Captain’s great-aunt she’d be—never went to Hafod but once a year, and thought a long time about it before she did that. She was a clever lady too—you’ll have seen the chairs she worked—wasn’t it chairs?’ he added, turning to his wife.

‘Yes, indeed,’ she said. ‘Your aunty’s not showed them to you? Ah, well, she must feel it hard, things being as they are. But our lady,—that’s what we call Mrs. Wynne,—she was handy with her fingers too. I can show you the present she brought me last Christmas as ever was.’

‘Oh, yes!’ Kathie exclaimed. ‘The pincushion! Mr. Davis told us of it.’

It was duly fetched and exhibited. It was rather a new-fashioned kind of pincushion, being one of those made out of a small cigar-box, which served for box and pincushion at once. It was most neatly made, covered with rich and uncommon-looking brocaded satin, which Mrs. Davis eyed

with great approval, and edged with a narrow frill of old thread lace.

‘Such a useful shape, too,’ said Mrs. Davis; ‘I’d never seen one like it before, but Mrs. Wynne told me she’d



covered a many. The old silk was a piece of a gown of her mother's. I believe there's some fine things of the old lady's still at Ty-gwyn.'

‘Yes, aunty has some lovely pieces; she's promised to

show us them,' said Kathie. 'Perhaps she'll give us some, Phil.'

Philippa looked up eagerly at this. She had been examining the pincushion with the greatest attention.

'Do you think she would perhaps, really?' she asked, when they were on their way home, having promised Mr. and Mrs. Davis to come to see them again some day soon.

'I daresay she would,' said Kathleen. 'Why are you in such a fuss about it, Phil?'

'Oh, because—because,' said the little girl, 'I *have* got such an idea into my head. If I could but manage it! Do you think, Kathie, I could possibly make a pincushion like that to send to mamma for her birthday? It would be so beautiful!'

'I don't see why you shouldn't,' said Kathie; 'I don't think it would be so very difficult. And I'm almost sure aunty would give you some bits.'

'If I had one very pretty piece for the top,' said Philippa, 'a plainer kind would do to frill round it, and *quite* plain would do to line it—just silk that one could get in any shop. And I could get some lace that would do very well. I have some money, you know. Couldn't we write to some shop in London?'

'I should think so. And you'd have to get some stuff to scent it—that one was scented, didn't you notice? What fun it would be to make it! If I had anybody to make one for, I'd like to make one too.'

‘Kathie!’ Philippa exclaimed, ‘you have your own mamma!’

‘Oh, but,’ said Kathleen, blushing a little, ‘I don’t remember her, you see. I’ve never made her anything. It’s different from you. Still—if I thought she’d like it. She’s often written about my learning to sew and to be neat-handed, and I don’t like that sort of thing, so I never answer that part of her letters.’

‘It would be *very* nice for you to make her something, to show her you are neat-handed. Wouldn’t it, Neville? Don’t you think so too?’ asked Philippa.

‘Yes,’ Neville replied. ‘I think it would be very nice. Only there’s one difficulty—where are you to get the boxes? There must be a box for that kind of pincushion.’

Philippa’s face fell; but Kathie’s, on the contrary, brightened up.

‘I know,’ she said. ‘I have an idea. But I won’t tell you just yet. Leave it to me, Philippa—you’ll see.’

‘But, Kathie,’ said the little girl plaintively, ‘you won’t forget, will you? You so often do, you know. I’ve only a fortnight before the box goes. Uncle and grandmamma had got it nearly all ready before she got ill; there are books and lots of things going out to papa, that can’t wait. And if I can’t do the pincushion, I must think of something else.’

‘Oh, I won’t forget,’ said Kathie confidently. ‘The first wet day—and it’s sure to be rain again soon; that’s how it

does in these hilly places; it's never long the same thing. Well, the first wet day, it would be a capital way of getting through the time to make pincushions.'

Philippa said nothing, but Neville noticed that her little face still looked dissatisfied.

'Never mind, Philippa,' he whispered; 'she's only teasing you. I'll see that she doesn't forget. And if she can't get a box for you, I'll try if I can't.'

'Thank you, Neville! oh, thank you so much!' said Philippa fervently, drawing a deep breath. 'How I wish you were my brother!'

Kathleen caught the last word. 'That's always the way,' she said. 'Perhaps if he was your brother, he wouldn't be so nice to you as he is.' Kathie was in one of her mischievous, teasing moods, and when this was the case she said things she did not really mean. But Philippa was rather matter-of-fact. She looked quite distressed.

'Oh, Kathie!' she began.

'Well?' said Kathie.

'You don't really mean that, do you? I know you've often told me that Neville was a *very* good brother to you. I'm sure she doesn't really mean it, Neville.'

Neville smiled at her anxious little face.

'No, I'm sure she doesn't,' he said. 'It is a shame of you to tease Phil, Kathie. You've made her look quite troubled, poor child.'

‘I’m very sorry,’ said Kathleen. ‘Phil isn’t to look troubled *once* the whole time she’s here. Tell me, dear, what can I do to make up for teasing you?’

Philippa slipped her hand through Kathie’s arm.

‘Kathie,’ she said, ‘if you would but see about the pincushions without waiting for a wet day. Now I’ve got it into my head, I do so want to do it. And I think it would take a good while to make, do you know—longer than you think, to do it quite neatly.’

‘Very well, you little fusser,’ said Kathie. ‘I’ll see what I can do. But mind, I’m not going to be mewed up sewing and bothering at pincushions all day, if it’s beautiful, fine weather like this.’

‘I don’t want you to do anything of the kind,’ said Philippa. ‘That’s why it’s so much better not to put off about it. We can take several days to them, and do a little every day.’

‘Humph!’ was Kathleen’s reply.

‘Why do you say that?’ asked Philippa.

‘Oh,’ said Kathie, ‘I know what your “doing a little bit every day” means. I know it of old. When she gets a thing in her head, Neville, she fidgets at it till it’s done, and won’t give herself any peace.’

‘Well, then, Kathie,’ said Philippa, ‘I just promise you I won’t do that way about the pincushion, if only you’ll set my mind at rest by helping me to get it begun.’

And she looked so pitiful, speaking in her quaint, earnest

way, that Kathleen could not help kissing her, and promising to do what she could at once.

That evening, after tea, Kathie touched her aunt's arm as they were leaving the dining-room.

'I want to speak to you a moment, aunty,' she said, and Miss Clotilda turned back with her.

'Do you remember, aunty,' she said, 'that one day, when I first came, you said you would show me some of the pieces of old silk and things of Mrs. Wynne's? And I think you said you'd give me one or two. Would you let us see them? And do you think you could give Phil some? She's taken such a fancy in her head;' and Kathie went on to explain about the box going out to India, and the pincushion old Mrs. Davis had shown them, which Philippa so much wished to copy for her mother.

'And,' Kathie went on, 'I've another idea too. We were thinking it would be very difficult to get a box to make it with. That morning when the cupboard was left open in my room, I saw several old pincushions that you said you had meant to cover fresh. Might, oh! *might* we have two of them? We could easily get some plain thin silk for lining them with—Phil has some money, and I have a very little—if some of the nice old pieces would do for the outside.'

Miss Clotilda looked a little bewildered.

'Two, my dear?' she said. 'I thought it was Philippa who wanted to make one. Do you want one too?'

Kathie blushed a little.

‘They said,’ she began, ‘Neville and Phil said, it would be so nice if I made one for mamma too. I’ve never made her anything— I don’t like sewing, you know, aunty, and she’s always writing about things like that.’

Miss Clotilda patted Kathie’s head.

‘Yes, dear,’ she said ; ‘I do think it would be very nice indeed. I am sure it would please your mamma. I am almost sure I can give you two of the soiled ones that you can undo and cover and line freshly. If you undo them carefully, you will see exactly how they are made without my helping you. You would rather make them all by yourselves, would you not ?’

‘Yes,’ said Kathie, ‘if we can. It would be much nicer, as they are to be presents to our mothers. Thank you *so* much, aunty.’

‘I will bring down the bundle of old pieces this evening, if you like,’ Miss Clotilda went on. ‘I know exactly where they are ; I can put my hand upon them in a moment. It will amuse us to look them over and choose which will do.’

And the kind creature set off up-stairs at once to fetch them, while Kathie, overjoyed, ran to tell Philippa the success of her application.

The pieces of silk proved quite as interesting as they expected.

‘It reminds me,’ said Miss Clotilda, with a smile, ‘of Mrs.

Goodrich in "The Fairchild Family," a story I read when I was little, when she gave Bessy and Lucy and Emily each two pieces of old brocaded silk or satin as a test of their neat-handedness. You have never seen the book, but it was a very favourite one of mine as a child.'

And she went on to tell them the rest of the story of the patches of silk, how the good little girls turned theirs to purpose, and how the poor naughty girl threw a bottle of ink over hers.

'Poor naughty girl!' said Kathie. 'I am afraid I must be rather like her, aunty. And Philippa is like all the good little girls rolled into one. Oh, aunty! what a lovely piece that is!'

It was a narrow satin and silk stripe of a curious salmon colour, and here and there were little daisies embroidered in gold thread. There was another pale grey satin, with wreaths of flowers running all over it, which was greatly to Philippa's taste; and as there was enough for the purpose of each of these, Miss Clotilda gave them to the children. Then a letter had to be written to be sent by the carrier to the draper's at Hafod, where Mrs. Wynne had always dealt, to order a yard of plain rose-coloured silk for Philippa, and the same quantity of white for Kathie, as linings for both pincushions. A contrast would be best, Miss Clotilda told them, as it was all but impossible to match the strange and delicate shades of the old silks, except perhaps in very rich and expensive materials. Bedtime had come before all this was



done, and the children went off to dream of 'flowered padu-soy,' and pearl-grey satins 'that would stand alone.'

Miss Clotilda had some difficulty the next morning in persuading them to go for a walk early and not to set to work till later.

'It will be very hot this afternoon,' she said. 'Indeed, I think there is thunder not far off. You will have a nice quiet time for getting to work

after dinner, and I will look out the old pincushions this morning.'

They set off, though rather reluctantly, for Kathie, now that she had taken up the idea, was more full of it than even Philippa. And she was much less ready than Philippa to yield her wishes and opinions to those of others.

It did not rain that afternoon, but, as Miss Clotilda had foreseen, it was very hot. And the children, all three—for Neville too seemed bitten by the pincushion mania—found it very pleasant to sit round a table in the nice cool library, busy with their work.

There was not much they could do at first beyond unpicking and measuring. Miss Clotilda had given them two of the pincushions out of the cupboard, and, as Philippa had foreseen, when they came to take them carefully to pieces, they found that there would really be more work to do than they had expected.

'What patience Mrs. Wynne must have had,' said Kathie, 'to do them so beautifully! Did you ever see anything so neat? Just look at the hemming of this frill, Phil.'

Philippa took it up to admire.

'We might hem our frills this afternoon,' she said, 'and then to-morrow, when we have the silk from Hafod, we can go on with the linings.'

'I do hope to-morrow will be a wet day,' said Kathie. 'We could get on so splendidly if it were.'

Neville looked up suddenly from one of the now uncovered pincushions which he had been examining.

‘You’ve forgotten about the scent,’ he said.

‘No, we haven’t,’ said Kathleen. ‘Aunty has some sachet-powder she is going to give us.’

‘And I’ll tell you what,’ he went on, ‘you’d better get some fresh bran. This cushion does smell a little musty, and it won’t be much trouble to unfasten it from the top of the box, and fill it fresh. Look, it’s only tacked down at the corners. The silk top keeps it in its place. Mrs. Wynne must have been a faddy old lady. Just see—there’s a sheet of note-paper under the cushion—and the date she made it.’

He drew out the paper as he spoke. On it was written, as he said, the date, ‘Ty-gwyn, January 24th, 1865.’

‘What a good plan!’ said Philippa; ‘the thick paper keeps it all so nice and even—perhaps she did it for that too. Let us put papers in ours with the date, Kathie. Perhaps our great-grandchildren will find them some day. We’d better put out names too.’

Kathie had no objection. And Neville very good-naturedly went off to the ‘shop’ to get some nice bran, to be ready for to-morrow.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND.



T actually rained the next day!

‘Who would have thought it?’ said Kathie, with a face of great content. ‘The weather so seldom does what one wants.’

‘We can set to work immediately after breakfast,’ said Philippa. For the rose-coloured silk and the white had come from Hafod the evening before, ‘just what one wanted,’ and Miss Clotilda had given them the satchet-powder, and had promised to look out some lace that would do for edging. ‘We have got everything right now,’ the little girl went on, her eyes sparkling.

So they established themselves in the library, with a newspaper spread out on the table to catch all the shreds and cuttings.

‘And the bran,’ added Neville, as he brought in a paper bag filled with the article in question. ‘Brân’s awfully messy stuff.’

He opened the bag as he spoke, and plunged his hand in.

‘I like the feeling of it,’ he said.

Philippa stood gazing at the paper bag.

‘Is that bran?’ she said. ‘Let me feel it too. I didn’t know bran was like that,’ she went on; ‘I thought it was something like cotton-wool.’

‘Oh, you silly girl,’ said Kathie, but Neville checked her. ‘How should she know?’ he said. ‘She’s never been in England till this year.’

But Philippa was not attending. She had pulled back her sleeve, and had plunged her arm into the bag.

‘Kathie,’ she said, ‘*that’s* the stuff my pocket was filled with in my dream. *Isn’t* it funny? For I didn’t know about making the pincushions then—and I didn’t know till this minute what bran was like.’

She was quite excited about it, and the others agreed it was very curious. But the work soon engrossed them all. Neville had something to do too this morning. He took charge of emptying the cushions of the old bran, and re-filling them, and most interesting work he found it, the first part especially. He shook out the cushions on to another newspaper, and for some minutes did not speak. Then Kathie looked round and asked him what he was doing.

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘this is such jolly fun! Just look here, Kathie and Phil,’ and he pointed to a row of needles and a few pins at the side of his newspaper. ‘I’ve found all these in the bran. And I expect there are a lot more, and some

ends of old brooch pins—looks like real gold,' he went on, holding up one—'it's as good as a hunt. You have to spread the stuff out quite thin and flat, and even then you've no idea how the needles hide. Hullo! here's another.'

Kathie and Philippa watched him for a few moments.

'Yes,' said Kathie, 'it's very interesting. But we must



get on with our work. And when are you going to fill the cushions with the new bran for us, Neville? I can stitch them up as soon as they are filled, and we must put a little bag in near the top with the scent-powder, Phil.'

'They won't take five minutes to do,' said Neville. 'Will you fetch me a big spoon, Kathie? It'll make less mess.'

And in a very few minutes, as he said, the cushions were filled. Then Neville went back to his needle-hunt, and for a quarter of an hour or so he was quite silent. Then he began to fidget.

‘I wish I had some more to do,’ he said. ‘Kathie, hasn’t aunty any more to be made over?’

Kathie shook her head.

‘No; the other two she wants to keep as they are for the present, she says,’ Kathie replied.

‘I’ve finished this stuff,’ said Neville. ‘Here—you may divide the needles among you. There are more than thirty. I’m going to keep these brooch pins to test if they’re pure gold. Oh, I wish it would leave off raining!’

Suddenly he jumped up and ran out of the room. In about ten minutes he was back again, another old pin-cushion and two or three pieces of silk in his hand.

‘Aunty says I may undo this one,’ he said, waving it over his head. ‘It’s the one out of my own room. I just remembered it was very shabby, and aunty says I may undo it and fill it fresh, if one of you girls will help me to cover the top again. The frill isn’t the same silk, you see, and it isn’t dirty—the top’s all pin-holed. I expect there’ll be a jolly good lot of needles in this one. Here goes!’ And he took the scissors and began to unpick it.

‘How funny you are, Neville!’ said Kathie. ‘You’re

quite excited over your needle-hunting. Now just see here, Phil; should we turn in the inside lining or tack it down *outside?*' and a discussion ensued between the two girls, and they paid no more attention to Neville.

On his side he was very quiet for some minutes. Neither Kathleen nor Philippa heard a curious sound—a sort of smothered exclamation—which escaped him. Nor did his sister notice that he had left his seat and was standing beside her, till he touched her on the arm.

'Kathie,' he said, and his voice sounded strange and almost hoarse, and Kathie, looking up, saw that he was deadly pale.

'Oh, Neville,' she exclaimed, 'what is the matter? Have you swallowed a needle?'

He could scarcely help smiling.

'Nonsense, Kathie,' he said. 'Nothing's the matter. It is this,' and he held out a sheet of note-paper, with some writing on it. The paper looked rather yellow, and was marked here and there at the edges as if it had been stitched. 'This is the paper that was in my pincushion, just like the others. It was meant to have the date upon it, I suppose. But it isn't that—look what it is instead. I can scarcely believe it. I feel as if I was dreaming. I want you to read the words.'

And Kathie read—though with some difficulty, for she too felt as if she were dreaming, and the lines danced

before her eyes. They were very few, however, and very legible, in Mrs. Wynne's clear, precise handwriting.

'My will, and some other papers of less importance, will be found in the plate-chest—containing the best silver—underneath the lining of green baize in the bottom of the box. The lining is only tacked in and will be easily removed.

DAVIDA WYNNE.'

Kathie, without speaking, turned the sheet of paper round. On the other side was written, what Neville had not noticed, a date, 'Ty-gwyn, May 15th, 1859,' just as there had been in the other pincushions, only this was an older one.

Kathie's eyes sparkled, and the power of speech seemed to return to her.

'Yes,' she said, 'she had thought this was a blank sheet, and she put the blank sheet in the envelope of "directions," and sealed it up, by mistake. Neville, Neville, Phil, it's *it!*'

Neville was trembling so, he could scarcely stand.

'What shall we do?' he said. 'I can't bear to risk any more disappointment for aunty. If we could look ourselves, first, but we can't. Suppose it isn't there after all—or suppose it doesn't leave things as they think. She may have changed—Mrs. Wynne, I mean.'

'No,' said Kathleen, 'I'm not afraid of the will *if it's there*. Mrs. Wynne told aunty almost the last thing that it would be all right. But she may have changed the place of keeping it—though it's not likely. I'll tell you

what, Neville—I'll ask aunty if she has ever looked in that plate-chest, and see what she says.'

'Yes,' said Neville, who was recovering his composure by now. 'We might do that. It would make it less of a disappointment if it *weren't* there.'

'Oh,' said Kathie, 'we could get her to show us the plate-chest even without that. Yes—that will be best. I'm sure I can manage it.'

'But then,' said Neville, 'we'd have to tell her about this paper all the same. We couldn't conceal it.'

'No; but don't you see that there would be no *disappointment* about it. She would know at once that it wasn't there before she could hope or wonder about it. I don't think she could bear any more "hoping," Neville.'

'No,' he agreed, 'I don't think she could.'

And he felt both pleased and surprised at Kathie's womanly thoughtfulness for her aunt.

'We *can't* work any more till we know for sure about it,' said little Phil. 'Oh, Kathie, do settle something quickly.'

'I'm going to,' said Kathie. 'Put all our things together neatly, Phil. I'll be back in a minute.'

And in less than five she was back.

'Phil, Neville,' she called out, 'you're to come up-stairs to the locked-up room where aunty keeps the best linen, and the best china, and the best silver. Aunty's going

to show it all to us because it's a wet day, and we don't want to work any more,'

'It is better not to tire yourselves over the pincushions,' said Miss Clotilda's gentle voice behind her, 'and you will have all the afternoon for them. I am sure it is not going to clear. So come along. I have got my keys. It is a very good idea of yours, Kathie.'

Up jumped Neville and Phil. Kathie was already nearly at the top of the staircase, Miss Clotilda following more slowly. From the long passage which ran almost the length of the house on the first floor, she led the way down a shorter one, then up a little flight of steps ending in a small landing where there were two doors.

Miss Clotilda pointed to one on the right.

'That was the old butler's room,' she said. 'He left last year, for he was too old to work and he would not rest while here.'

'Is he dead?' asked Neville.

'Yes,' she replied; 'he died a week or so before Mrs. Wynne did. I have often thought,' she added, with a sigh, 'that he might have known something had he been alive.'

She chose a key and opened the other door. It led into a fair-sized room. All round three sides were large cupboards; one or two big cases stood on the floor, and at one side were two strongly-made wooden chests.

‘The linen is in those cupboards,’ Miss Clotilda went on, ‘and the best china near the window. In those boxes there are some new blankets and counterpanes that Mrs. Wynne never saw. They had just been ordered. And those are the two plate chests. Nearly all the silver is laid away.’

Kathie looked at Neville.

‘Best and every-day silver all together?’

‘Oh, no,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘The *best* is in this one,’ and she touched it; ‘the other was only brought up here for greater security when Mrs Wynne died, and I had to stay on here alone with Martha. Now, what shall I show you first, children? The china, perhaps, would please you the most?’

‘No, thank you, aunty,’ said Neville and Kathleen; ‘please show us the best silver first.’

Miss Clotilda looked a little surprised.

‘Well, I daresay, it *is* interesting,’ she said. ‘There are some very curious old things.’

She chose another key as she spoke, and in another moment the lock, which was an excellent one, though very old, was opened. Inside, the chest was divided into several compartments, all lined with green baize; all filled with every kind of silver articles, carefully enveloped in tissue paper.

‘You may lift out a tray at a time,’ his aunt said to



‘THAT IS ALL,’ SAID NEVILLE.

Neville; 'it is astonishing how many there are, and what that box will hold.'

Neville obeyed, indeed he did more than obey; he went on lifting out tray after tray, and placing them in rows on the floor.

'Stop, my dear boy,' said Miss Clotilda, 'let us look at one at a time. You will cover the floor with them—and'—

'Let me take all out,' said Neville. 'I want to get to the bottom of the box. I know how to put them back again.'

Miss Clotilda said no more. Kathie and Philippa came to Neville and peered into the chest.

'That is all,' said Neville. He had grown very pale again, but his aunt did not notice it.

Kathie leant over and felt at the bottom.

'It is soft down here,' she said. 'Is there nothing underneath, aunty?'

'There is a thin cushion. The baize is lined with cotton-wool,' Miss Clotilda replied. 'Some of the trays are the same.'

But Kathie kept feeling about.

'Neville,' she whispered, 'try if you can't pull up one corner. It seems loose. I'll keep aunty from looking.'

She turned to Miss Clotilda, who was already unwrapping some of the papers, 'with some little question about their

contents. Neville bent down over the chest without speaking.

Suddenly he gave a sort of smothered cry, and the little girls looking round saw that he held something in his hand—two things indeed—two packets, not very thick, but long and flat, both sealed and both labelled in clear writing—the one ‘Various papers, inventories, &c., to be looked over by David and Clotilda Powys,’ and the other—oh, the other!

‘My last Will and Testament.’

Neville could not speak. Kathie flew forward.

‘Tell her!’ he half whispered.

How they told her they could not afterwards recollect. The wits and perceptions are strangely sharpened on some occasions. I suspect very little ‘telling’ was required, though of course when their aunt had somewhat recovered from the first overwhelming



surprise and joy, she was deeply interested in the history of the sheet of paper, and touched by the children's thought for her.

Some hours of suspense had still to be endured, for Miss Clotilda would not open the precious packet except in presence of the lawyer, and Neville was sent off at once to Boyneth to telegraph for him to Hafod, and to beg him to come at once. He came that very afternoon, and then indeed all doubts were set at rest. All proved to be as had been expected, and as Mrs. Wynne had always led her relations to believe would be the case. Everything was provided for, nobody was forgotten; the legacy which Mr. Wynne-Carr had reason to look for was to be his, so that no ill-feeling would be caused to any one.

'Yes, it is most fair and satisfactory in every particular,' said Mr. Price, the lawyer, 'if only my respected friend, Mrs. Wynne, had been less obstinate and eccentric in insisting on keeping the document in her possession! What trouble it would have saved!'

'But,' said Kathie, whom even Mr. Pryce's presence did not overawe, 'I don't think we should have cared about it at all as much as we do if we had never known what it was to lose it;' and in this Miss Clotilda and Neville, and Philippa, who seemed to have become quite one of them, agreed, though as for Mr. Pryce's opinion I cannot take upon myself to answer.

He was honestly delighted, however, and went off that evening laden with directions of all kinds, among them a telegram to be despatched to India at once, 'regardless of expense':—

'From Clotilda Powys, to Captain Powys, 200th regt.

'Will found. All right. Arrange to come home as soon as possible.'

Those, I think, were the words it contained.

'And oh, aunty,' said Katie, dancing with delight, 'just *fancy* what papa and mamma will think when they read it. Phil, why don't you look happy? What are you so grave about?'

The little girl blushed.

'I don't mean to be selfish,' she said, 'but—I would so like to go on making my pincushion. You know I've only about ten days more to make it in.'

'Of course you shall, my dear,' said Miss Clotilda. 'Selfish! No indeed, that you are not. And but for you, I do not believe we should ever have found the will at all.'

Philippa looked intensely pleased.

'I always had a feeling it was in the house,' she said. 'And then my dream was very queer. But it wasn't much good, for it was such a muddle.'

‘Dreams generally are,’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘No, I wasn’t thinking of your dream. It was your wishing to make something for your mother in the first place’—

‘And our going to Dol-bach and seeing the pincushion there, and our travelling with the farmer, and my seeing the old ones in the cupboard—*that* came of my not posting the letter to aunty, so that our trunks hadn’t come, and aunty had to open the cupboard to get out a nightgown for me—and—and—oh, dear, how strange it seems! Really as if it was a good thing I forgot to post the letter.’

Miss Clotilda could not help smiling.

‘Don’t let that encourage you to think carelessness of any kind “a good thing,” my dear Kathie,’ she said, ‘even though good does sometimes come of ill.’

‘And it was a *sort* of carelessness that caused all the trouble, you see. If the old lady—old Mrs. Wynne—had only looked at the paper before she put it in the envelope, there wouldn’t have been any, would there?’ said Philippa, in her little prim way.

‘Poor Mrs. Wynne!’ said Miss Clotilda. ‘She would have been the last to wish to cause any of us any trouble.’

‘Well, all’s well that ends well, aunty,’ said Neville cheerily. ‘We have nothing but nice and jolly things to

think of now. Do let us talk about how soon papa and mamma can possibly get home.'

'All's well that ends well,' as Neville said, and what is more, when 'all is well,' there is very little to tell about it. Sooner almost than could have been hoped for came a telegram in reply from Captain Powys, announcing the date at which he and the children's mother and little sister might be expected.

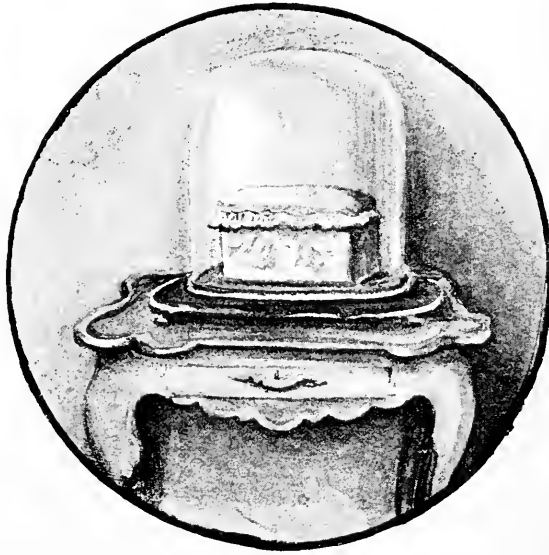
The leaves were still on the trees, and Ty-gwyn looking *almost* as pretty as in full summer when the travellers arrived to find Kathleen still with her aunt, though poor little Philippa had had to go back to school at the end of the holidays.

But she came to see her friends again before long, and this time for more than a visit, for it had been arranged that during the three years of her parents' absence she was to live with the Powyses altogether, and share Kathie's lessons.

So Miss Clotilda's pleasant castles in the air came to be realized. I doubt if any happier family was to be found *anywhere* than the good people, big and little, in the old white house near the sea, that Christmas when Neville came home for his holidays, to find them all there together.

And in one corner of the library, under a glass shade and on a little stand all to itself, is a queer old-fashioned-looking sort of box, covered in faded silk, and seemingly rather out of

place among the pretty things with which the room is adorned. But no one thinks it out of place when its history is told, and it is known to be the old pincushion, the *very* identical old pincushion, which for so many years had held the secret of the missing will!



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